THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOLY TRINITY ASSERTED,

IN REPLY TO SOME LATE PAMPHLETS.

By DANIEL WATERLAND, D. D.
LATE CHAPLAIN IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY, AND MASTER OF MAGDALEN COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

In Necessariis, Unitas:
In Non necessariis, Libertas:
In omnibus, Prudentia et Charitas.

He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. John iii. 18.

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INTRODUCTION.

THERE has appeared, very lately, a ſmall pamphlet[a], of 76 pages, intituled, A ſober and charitable diſquiſition concerning the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity; endeavouring to ſhew, that thoſe in the different ſchemes ſhould bear with each other in their different ſentiments, and ſhould not ſeparate communions The treatiſe appears to be written in a good manner, and with a chriſtian ſpirit; on which account it deſerves the more notice: and the queſtion debated in it, is undoubtedly important in every view, whether with regard to peace in this life, or happineſs in the next. And as I have formerly ſpent ſome time and pains

[a] Printed for John Gray, at the Croſs Keys in the Poultry near Cheapſide, 1732.

N. B. There were ſeveral other pieces which preceded, or ſoon followed it, relating to the ſame cauſe.

1. Mr. Nation's Sermon, preached Sept. 8, 1731.
2. A letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C. 1732.
3. A vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon: with a letter from Mr. Nation.
4. A letter to the author of the Vindication: with a ſecond letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C.
5. A reply to Mr. P. C.'s letter.
6. A poſtſcript, or a third letter to Mr. Nation. By P. C.

pains in diſcuſſing the truth of that high and holy doctrine, from ſcripture, reaſon, and antiquity, ſo now I think it concerns me the more to debate, in like manner, the importance of it: which I ſhall, by God's aſſiſtance, endeavour to do, fully and fairly, with all due care and attention, and with all becoming reverence for the ſubject, as well as reſpect towards the reader.

Before I enter upon the main debate, it will be proper to clear the way, by ſome preliminary obſervations concerning the ſeveral ſorts of perſons who deny the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and their views in doing it; as alſo concerning the advocates, on the other ſide, who aſſert the importance of that ſacred doctrine, and the general principles on which they proceed.

I. As to the perſons who deny the importance of the doctrine, they are reducible to three kinds; being either ſuch as diſbelieve the doctrine itſelf; or ſuch as are in ſome ſuſpence about it; or, laſtly, ſuch as really aſſent to it, as true doctrine. It is with this laſt ſort only, that our preſent debate is properly concerned. But yet for the clearer apprehending thoſe three different kinds of men, and their different views in joining together ſo far, in the ſame cauſe, it will not be improper to ſay ſomething ſeverally and diſtinctly of each.

1. Thoſe that diſbelieve the doctrine itſelf, while they join with others in decrying the importance

importance of it, are to be looked upon as a kind of artful men, who think it policy to carry on a ſcheme gently and leiſurely, and to ſteal upon the unwary, by ſoft and almoſt inſenſible degrees. A method which is indeed commonly ſlower in producing the effect, but is the ſurer for being ſo; as it is leſs ſhocking, and more inſinuating. They are content therefore, at firſt, to make men cool and indifferent towards the doctrine; as thinking it a good point gained, and a promiſing advance made towards the laying it aſide. With theſe views, both ſocinians and arians, who diſbelieve the doctrine itſelf, may yet be content, for a time, to declare only againſt the importance of it. Deiſts alſo may join in the ſame thing, conceiving, that indifference, as to a prime article of chriſtianity, may in time draw on the ſame kind of indifference towards chriſtianity itſelf. They are diſbelievers with reſpect to the doctrine of the Trinity, and with reſpect alſo to all revealed religion: and they will of courſe favour and incourage the denial of any part, in order to bring on the ſubverſion of the whole. However, our preſent concern is not directly with deiſts, nor with ſuch as deny the doctrine of the Trinity: for our diſpute now is, not about the certainty of revealed religion (which is ſuppoſed in our preſent queſtion) nor about the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity, (which is alſo ſuppoſed;) but about the importance, uſe, or value of it.

2. A ſecond ſort of perſons, before mentioned, are ſuch as ſeriouſly believe chriſtianity in the general, and do not diſbelieve the doctrine of the Trinity in particular, but ſuſpend their belief of it, and are a kind of ſceptics on that head. Theſe men deny the importance of the doctrine, becauſe they think it doubtful, whether it be a doctrine of holy ſcripture or no: and they judge very rightly in the general, that a ſtreſs ought not to be laid upon uncertainties, upon things precarious and conjectural, which cannot be proved to the ſatisfaction of the common reaſon of mankind. They are right in theſi, and wrong in hypotheſi, as ſhall be ſhewn in the ſequel. Only I may hint, by the way, that our preſent debate is not directly with this kind of men: for they are rather to be referred to what has been written for the truth of the doctrine, than to what more immediately concerns the importance of it. Yet becauſe the preſumed uncertainty, or doubtfulneſs of the doctrine, is by theſe men made the principal objection againſt the importance of it, and the author of the Sober and charitable Diſquiſition ſeems to lay the main ſtreſs of the cauſe there, quite through his performance; it will be neceſſary to give that objection a place in this diſcourſe, and to return an anſwer to it in the general, or ſo far as may be proper; not to draw the whole controverſy about the truth of the doctrine, into this other queſtion concerning the importance of it.

While

While I am ſpeaking of men doubtful in this article, I would be underſtood of ſerious and religious men, and not of ſuch perſons whoſe minds are purely ſecular, and who are indifferent to every thing but what concerns this world: ſuch perſons are of no conſideration in our preſent queſtion; neither are they men proper to be reaſoned with, as they have no reliſh at all for inquiries of this nature. But I proceed.

3. A third kind of men are thoſe that believe the truth of the doctrine, but demur to the importance of it. And as Epiſcopius was, in a manner, their father or founder, and great leader, they have been frequently called after him, Epiſcopians. Theſe are properly the perſons whom we have here to diſpute with: for they are the men who make the truth, and the importance of the doctrine two diſtinct queſtions, admitting the one, and rejecting the other, or however demurring to it. The deſign of this middle way was to reconcile parties, if poſſible, and to favour the ſocinians ſo far, as to condemn their doctrines only, without condemning the men. But this new and fruitleſs expedient was very much diſliked by all that had any warm and hearty concern for the true and ancient faith. Such coldneſs and indifferency, with regard to a prime article of chriſtianity, appeared to many, to be nothing elſe but an artful ſpecious way of betraying it, and likely to do more miſchief than an open denial. The

ableſt and ſoundeſt divines, as well lutheran[a] as reformed[b], have reclaimed ſtrongly againſt it, deteſting the neutrality of the remonſtrant brethren, as tending to undermine the goſpel of Chriſt. The divines of our church, however otherwiſe ſuppoſed to be againſt calviniſm, and to favour arminianiſm, yet ſmartly condemned the remonſtrants in that article. Dr. Bull, particularly, appeared againſt them in a very accurate and learned treatiſe[c], in the year 1694. And it is worth obſerving, how Dr. Nicholls afterwards expreſſes himſelf, in the name of our whole body. "There is another armi-" "nian doctrine, which we avoid as deadly poi-" "ſon, their aſſertion that there is no neceſſity" "of

[a] For the lutherans, I ſhall cite Buddeus only, who is as mild and moderate in his cenſure of Epiſcopius, as any of them.

Nimio enim concordiæ, diſſentienteſque tolerandi ſtudio, ea interdum ad fidem et ſalutem minime neceſſaria judicavit, quæ vetus eccleſia ipſa, ſcripturæ ſuffragio hac in re non deſtituta, adeo neceſſaria pronunciavit, ut æternæ ſalutis ſpem non habeat qui ea negare aut impugnare auſus fuerit. Buddei Iſag. p. 422.

[b] The learned Witſius may ſpeak for the reformed.

Injurii in Deum remonſtrantes ſunt, quando palpum obtruſuri, quos plus juſto amant, ſocinianis, eos deſcribunt quaſi qui vitam ſuam ex evangelii præſcripto ſic inſtituunt, ut Patrem in Filio ejus colant, et ab utroque Spiritûs Sancti gratiam ſanctis piiſque precibus ambire ſtudeant. Quid audiemus tandem? Illine vitam ex evangelii præſcripto inſtituunt, qui ſatisfactionem Chriſti negantes, evangelium evertunt? Illine Patrem in Filio colunt, qui æternum Dei Filium ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον eſſe calumniantur, quem uti talem adorantes convertunt in idolum? Illine piis precibus Spiritûs Sancti gratiam ab utroque ambiunt, qui Spiritum Dei accidens, et creaturam, vel ſaltem medium quid inter Deum et creaturam eſſe blaſphemant? Witſ. in Symbol. Apoſtol. p. 76.

[c] Judicium eccleſiæ catholicæ de neceſſitate credendi, &c.

" of acknowledging three perſons in the di-
" vine nature, nor that Chriſt in particular is
" the eternal Son of God: this heretical no-
" tion our church abominates and deteſts, as
" an heinous impiety, and what was never heard
" of in the writings of the primitive chriſtians[a]."
Thus far he, in relation to our divines of the church of England.

As to the divines of the ſeparation, they are known to have been as zealous as any men could be, for the neceſſity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, as the ſum and kernel of the chriſtian religion, the baſis, or foundation of the chriſtian faith. The teſtimonies of Mr. Baxter, Mr. Corbet, Dr. Manton, and Dr. Bates, to this purpoſe, may be ſeen at one view in a late writer[b]: to thoſe might be added Dr. Owen[c], and Mr. Lob[d], and perhaps many more. In ſhort, all parties and denominations of chriſtians, who

[a] Nicholls's defence of the church of England. Part I. C. 9. Mr. Scrivener, long before, (A. D. 1672.) had paſſed the like cenſure.

Hunc [Socinum] non minima ex parte ſecutus Epiſcopius, et ipſe antiquitatis (quod norunt docti) imperitus, novam credendi imo et philoſophandi licentiam, regulamque affectavit: et—myſteria chriſtianæ Fidei ſumma, tam ſingulari et inaudito acumine, vel craſſo potius faſtu, tractavit, ut non pertimeſcat liberos cuivis fideli eos articulos de S. S. Trinitate permittere, abſque quibus conſtans et fœderalis fides docuit, nullum ad vitam immortalem aditum patere chriſtianis. Scrivener. Apolog. adv. Dallæum, in Præfat.

[b] Mr. Eveleigh's preface to a treatiſe intituled, The Deity of Chriſt proved fundamental.

[c] Owen's Vindiciæ Evangelicæ, præf. p. 64.

[d] Growth of Error, p. 3, 50, 69, 75, &c.

who appear to have had the truth of the doctrine at heart, or any good degree of zeal for it, have contended equally for the neceſſity of believing it, and have refuſed communion with the impugners of it.

II. I come next to obſerve ſomething of the general principles upon which they build, who aſſert the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, and who refuſe communion with the open impugners of it.

1. They lay it down as a certain and indiſputable principle, that there are ſome ſcripture doctrines of greater importance than others: and they generally make their eſtimate of that greater importance, by the relation or connexion which any doctrine is conceived to have with chriſtian practice, or worſhip, or with the whole œconomy of man's ſalvation by Chriſt[a]; or by its being plainly, frequently, or ſtrongly inculcated in holy ſcripture. Doctrines of this character are commonly ſtiled neceſſaries, eſſentials, fundamentals, prime verities, and the like. Not that I mightily like the word neceſſary, in this caſe, being a word of equivocal meaning, and great ambiguity, leading to miſtakes, and furniſhing much matter for cavils. For when we come to aſk, neceſſary to what? or, neceſſary to whom? and in what degree? then ariſes perplexity; and there is need of a multitude of diſtinctions to ſet the matter clear, ſo

[a] See Dr. Sherlock's vindication of the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet. Printed in 1682. C. 5. p. 256, &c.

ſo as to ſerve all poſſible caſes. A doctrine may be ſaid to be neceſſary to the being of the church, or to the ſalvation of ſome perſons ſo and ſo qualified, or to the ſalvation of all: and many queſtions may ariſe about the preciſe degree of the neceſſity in every inſtance. But it is eaſily underſtood how one doctrine may be ſaid to be more important than another; as more depends upon it, or as it more affects the vitals of chriſtianity, than doctrines of another kind: and we need look no further than to the nature and reaſon of things, and to the analogy of faith, to be able to diſtinguiſh what doctrines are thus important in the general, and what not. Yet there is no giving an exact catalogue of thoſe important, or fundamental doctrines; though it is for the moſt part eaſy to ſay of any particular doctrine which may be mentioned, what claſs it may be reaſonably referred to; and whether, or how far, it may be worth contending for. We cannot give a compleat catalogue of virtues, any more than of articles of faith, ſo as to be poſitive, that thoſe particular virtues, and in ſuch a particular degree, are neceſſary to all perſons, or to any perſon that ſhall be named. The preciſe quantity of virtue (if I may ſo call it) abſolutely neceſſary to ſalvation, is no more to be defined, than the preciſe quantity of faith. Yet we know, in the general, that ſincere and univerſal obedience to what God commands (allowing for infirmities) is neceſſary to ſalvation:

vation: and in like manner, ſincere and univerſal aſſent to what God reveals, makes up the other part of the terms of acceptance; as faith and obedience together make up the whole.

2. They who aſſert the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, take it for granted, among chriſtians, that faith in the goſpel of Chriſt, is neceſſary to the ſalvation of all men, who are bleſſed with goſpel light; and that men ſhall periſh eternally for unbelief, for rejecting that goſpel faith, once ſufficiently propounded to them: *Go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature: he that believeth and is baptized, ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned*[a].

3. They conceive farther, that as we are in duty bound to receive the goſpel faith, ſo are we likewiſe obliged, and under pain of damnation, to preſerve it whole and entire, ſo far as in us lies; and neither to deprave it ourſelves, nor to take part with them that do. It is our bounden duty to *hold faſt the form of ſound words — in faith and love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus*[b]: to be *ſound in the faith*[c]: to *ſpeak things which become ſound doctrine*[d]: to *examine whether we be in the faith*[e]; and in a word, to *contend earneſtly for the faith once delivered unto the ſaints*[f]. So much for the obligations

[a] Mark xvi. 15, 16. compare John iii. 36. Rev. xxi. 8.
[b] 2 Tim. i. 13. [c] Tit. i. 13. ii. 2. [d] Tit. ii. 1. 1 Tim. i. 10. 2 Tim. iv. 3. [e] 2 Cor. xiii. 5. comp. Rev. xiv. 12. [f] Jude 3. comp. 1 Tim. iv. 6.

ligations we lie under, to keep the faith of Chriſt whole and undefiled. Next, we are to obſerve how dangerous a thing it is, to corrupt the true faith in any heinous degree, either by adding to it, or taking away from it. One of the earlieſt inſtances of groſs corruption by adding to the faith of Chriſt, appeared in the converted jews, or judaizing chriſtians, who taught the neceſſity of obſerving circumciſion and the law of Moſes, together with chriſtianity. Againſt thoſe falſe apoſtles, who taught ſuch pernicious doctrine, St. Paul drew his pen, looking upon them as ſubverters of the goſpel of Chriſt[a]. And he was ſo zealous in that matter, as to ſay, *Though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other goſpel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed*[b]. Where by another goſpel, he does not mean another religion ſubſtituted in the room of chriſtianity; (for thoſe falſe teachers were chriſtians ſtill, not apoſtates) but ſome adulterous mixtures, tending to evacuate the goſpel law, and to fruſtrate the grace of God[c].

I ſhall give a ſecond inſtance of groſs corruption; not in adding to, but in taking from the chriſtian doctrine, in an article of very great importance. There was in the days of the apoſtles, and after, a ſect of opiniators, who, (whether being aſhamed of the croſs of Chriſt, or whether thinking it impoſſible for God

[a] Gal. i. 6, 7. [b] Gal. i. 8. [c] Gal. ii. 21. v. 2.

God to become man[a]) were pleaſed to deny that Chriſt Jeſus had any real humanity, but that he was a kind of walking phantom, or apparition; had no human fleſh, but impoſed upon the eyes, and other ſenſes of the ſpectators. Theſe men were afterwards called docetæ, and phantaſiaſtæ; which one may well enough render viſioniſts, or viſionaries. We are next to take notice, how St. John treated them, and what directions he gave to other chriſtians concerning them. He conſidered them as deluding teachers, that ſubverted foundations; and he gave them the name and title of antichriſts. *Every ſpirit that confeſſeth not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh, is not of God. And this is that ſpirit of antichriſt*[b], &c. In another place, ſpeaking of the ſame men, he ſays, *Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confeſs not that Jeſus Chriſt is come in the fleſh: this is a deceiver, and an antichriſt*[c]. It is manifeſt that he does not point his cenſure at the jews, who denied that the Meſſiah was come; for he ſpeaks of new men that had then lately entered into the world, whereas the jews had been from the beginning: beſides, that the jews did not deny that Jeſus (or the man called Chriſt Jeſus) had come in the fleſh. Therefore,

[a] Alii quoque hæretici uſque adeo Chriſti manifeſtam amplexati ſunt divinitatem, ut dixerint illum fuiſſe ſine carne, et totum illi ſuſceptum detraxerint hominem, ne decoquerent in illo divini nominis poteſtatem, &c. Novat. C. xxiii. p. 87. Edit. Welchman.

[b] 1 John iv. 3. [c] 2 John 7.

Therefore, I ſay, St. John levelled not this cenſure of his againſt the jews, but againſt ſome chriſtian heretics of that time, and thoſe particularly that denied our Lord's humanity; in oppoſition to whom, he exhorts the brethren to abide in the doctrine of Chriſt[a], and not to receive the gainſayers into their houſes, nor to ſalute them with God ſpeed, leſt they ſhould become thereby partakers of their evil deeds[b]. By evil deeds I underſtand the overt acts of that hereſy, the teaching, ſpreading, and inculcating it. Thus hereſies, that is, the teaching or promoting of pernicious doctrines, are reckoned among the works of the fleſh[c], by St. Paul: who alſo calls falſe teachers deceitful workers[d], and evil workers[e]; becauſe the promoting and encouraging of falſe and dangerous doctrines, is a very ill practice, a wicked employ: which I hint, by the way, for the clearer explication of St. John's meaning in the phraſe of evil deeds.

I ſhall mention a third ſcripture inſtance of groſs corruption in doctrine, which was the denial of a future reſurrection; dangerous doctrine, ſubverſive of chriſtianity. St. Paul very ſolemnly admoniſhed the Corinthians[f], to prevent their giving ear to ſuch pernicious ſuggeſtions: and he afterwards excommunicated Hymeneus, Philetus, and Alexander, for ſpreading

[a] 2 John 9. [b] 2 John 11. [c] Gal. v. 19, 20.
[d] 2 Cor. xi. 13. [e] Philip. iii. 2. [f] 1 Cor. xv.

ing and propagating them, delivering the men over to Satan, that they might learn not to blaſpheme[a].

From the three inſtances now mentioned, it may ſufficiently appear, that the corrupting or maiming chriſtianity in its vitals, by denying or deſtroying its prime articles, or fundamental doctrines, is a very dangerous thing; and that we are obliged, under pain of damnation, neither to do it ourſelves, nor to abet, countenance, or encourage thoſe that do, by communicating with them.

4. But it is farther to be obſerved, that in ſlighter matters, in things not nearly affecting the vitals of chriſtianity, the rule is for chriſtians to bear with one another; not to divide or ſeparate, but to agree among themſelves; ſo to diſagree in harmleſs opinions, or indifferent rites, as to unite in faith and love, and in chriſtian fellowſhip[b]. Peace is a very valuable thing, and ought not to be ſacrificed even to truth; unleſs ſuch truth be important, and much may depend upon it. A man is not obliged, in all caſes, to declare all he knows; and if he does declare his ſentiments, and knows them to be true, yet he need not inſiſt upon them with rigour, if the point conteſted be of a ſlight nature or value, in compariſon to the church's peace. Let him enjoy his own liberty in that caſe; and let others have theirs

[a] Compare 1 Tim. i. 20. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18.
[b] Rom. xiv, xv. Coloſſ. ii. 16, 17.

theirs too; and ſo all will be right. Let them differ, ſo far, by conſent, and yet live together in peace and charity. But then, as to weightier matters, it concerns us carefully to obſerve, that rules of peace are but ſecondary and ſubordinate to thoſe of piety or charity, and muſt veil to them. Peace muſt be broken in this world, whenever it is neceſſary to do it for the ſecuring ſalvation in the next for ourſelves, or others: and a breach of peace, in ſuch inſtances, is obedience to the higher law of charity, is conforming to the primary and great commandments, the love of God, and the love of our neighbour. Therefore peace, in ſuch caſes, muſt be ſacrificed to truth and charity, that is, to the honour of God, and the eternal intereſts of mankind.

Theſe things premiſed, it remains now only to inquire, what kind of a doctrine the doctrine of the Trinity is; whether it be of ſuch a ſlight and indifferent nature, as not to be worth the inſiſting upon at the expence of peace; or whether it be of ſuch high value and importance, that it ought to be maintained as an eſſential of chriſtianity againſt all oppoſers. This is the great queſtion now before us, and I ſhall endeavour to examine into it with due care and application.

The gentlemen who look upon it as a non-fundamental, have ſeveral things to urge, but ſuch as may moſt of them be reduced to three heads, as follow. 1. That the received doctrine of the Trinity is not clear enough to be admitted for a

fundamental. 2. That it is merely ſpeculative, or however, not practical enough to be important. 3. That it is not ſufficiently inſiſted upon in ſcripture, as of neceſſity to ſalvation. Now, in return to theſe three conſiderations, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew, in ſo many diſtinct chapters, that the doctrine is ſufficiently clear, and alſo practical, and inſiſted upon likewiſe in ſcripture, as much as the nature of the thing needs, or requires.

THE

THE

IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE

OF THE

TRINITY

ASSERTED, &c.

CHAP. I.

Shewing that the doctrine of the Trinity is sufficiently CLEAR *to be admitted as a* FUNDAMENTAL *article.*

CLEAR may be conſidered in two views, either with reſpect to the matter of the doctrine, or with reſpect to the proofs upon which it reſts. Let us examine the thing both ways.

1. It may be ſuggeſted, that the doctrine is not clear, with regard to the matter of it: It is myſterious doctrine. Be it ſo: The tremendous Deity is all over myſterious, in his nature, and in his attributes, in his works and ways.

It is the property of the divine Being to be unſearchable: And if he were not ſo, he would not be divine. Muſt we therefore reject the moſt certain truths concerning the Deity, only becauſe they are incomprehenſible, when every thing almoſt belonging to him muſt be ſo of courſe? If ſo, there is an end, not only of all revealed religion, but of natural religion too; and we muſt take our laſt refuge in downright atheiſm. There are myſteries in the works of nature, as well as in the word of God; and it is as eaſy to believe both as one. We do not mean, by myſteries, poſitions altogether unintelligible, or that carry no idea at all with them: We do not mean unſenſed characters, or empty ſounds: But we mean propoſitions contained in general terms, which convey as general ideas, not deſcending to particulars. The ideas are clear ſo far as they go; only they do not reach far enough to ſatisfy curioſity. They are ideas of intellect[a], for the moſt part; like the ideas which we form of our own ſouls: For ſpiritual ſubſtance, at leaſt (if any ſubſtance) falls not under imagination, but muſt be underſtood, rather than imagined. The ſame is the caſe with many abſtract verities, in numbers eſpecially; which are not the leſs verities for being purely intellectual, and beyond all imagery. Reaſon contemplates them, and clearly too, though fancy can lay no hold of them, to draw their picture in the mind. Such, I ſay, are our ideas of the divine

[a] See Addenda, p. 496.

divine Being, and of a Trinity in Unity; ideas of intellect, and general; intelligible as far as the thing is revealed, and aſſented to ſo far as intelligible. We underſtand the general truths, concerning a Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt: We underſtand the general nature of an union and a diſtinction; and what we underſtand, we believe. As to the minute particulars relating to the manner, or modus of the thing, we underſtand them not: our ideas reach not to them, but ſtop ſhort in the generals, as our faith alſo does. For our faith and our ideas keep pace with each other; and we believe nothing about particulars whereof nothing is revealed[a], neither expreſly, nor conſequentially.

Such a general aſſent as I have mentioned, is what we give to the truth of the divine perfections, Neceſſary-Exiſtence, Eternity, Ubiquity, Preſcience, and the like[b]. Whatever obſcurity, or defect there is in our Ideas of the divine attributes, we think it no good reaſon for denying either the general truths, or the importance of them. So then, no juſt objection can be made againſt the importance of any doctrine, from its myſterious nature. The moſt myſterious of all are in reality the moſt important; not becauſe they are myſterious, but becauſe they relate to things divine, which muſt of

[a] See the ſubject of myſteries treated of more at large either in my Firſt defence. Qu. XXI. p. 308, &c. or in Norris's account of reaſon and faith, p. 117, 118. Or in Mr. Browne's Lecture Sermons for Lady Moyer, p. 257.—262.

[b] See my Firſt defence, Qu. XXI. p. 306, &c.
Second defence, Qu. XXI. p. 425, alias 430.

of courſe be myſterious to weak mortals, and perhaps to all creatures whatever. But even myſterious doctrines have a bright ſide, as well as a dark one; and they are clear to look upon, though too deep to be ſeen through.

It has been ſometimes objected, that however clear the doctrine may ſeem to be to men of parts and learning, yet certainly it cannot be ſo to common Chriſtians. But why not to common Chriſtians, as well as to others? It is as clear to them as moſt other high and divine things can be. It is as clear, for inſtance, as the divine Eternity, or Omnipreſence. Every common Chriſtian profeſſing Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, to be ſo diſtinct as not to be one the other, and ſo united as to be one God, has as clear an idea of what he ſays, as when he prays, *Our Father which art in heaven*; or when he repeats after the Pſalmiſt, *Thou art about my path, and about my bed, and ſpieſt out all my ways*[a]. And, I am perſuaded, upon examination, he will be able to give as good an account of the one, as he will of the other. The thing is plain, and intelligible in either caſe, but in the general only, not as to the particular manner. Aſk, how three are one, and probably both catechumen and catechiſt will be perfectly at a nonplus: Or aſk, how God is in heaven, and how about our path, or our bed, and they will both be equally confounded. But, by the way, let

[a] Pſalm cxxxix. 2.

let it be here conſidered, whether common Chriſtians may not often have clearer ideas of thoſe things, than the bolder and more inquiſitive, becauſe they are content to reſt in generals, and to ſtop at what they underſtand, without darkening it afterwards by words without knowledge. The notion of Eternity for inſtance, is a clear notion enough to a common Chriſtian: But to a perſon that perplexes himſelf with nice inquiries about ſucceſſion, or paſt duration, that very firſt notion which in the general was clear, may become obſcure, by his blending perplexities with it. The ſame may be ſaid of Omnipreſence. The general notion of it is competently clear: But when a man has been perplexing his thoughts with curious inquiries about a ſubſtantial or a virtual preſence, about extenſion, or non-extenſion, and the like; I queſtion whether at length he may come away with ſo clear or juſt ideas of the main thing as may be found in any common Chriſtian. So again as to divine Fore-knowledge and Free-will, they are both of them clearly underſtood, as far as they need be, by every plain Chriſtian; while many a conceited ſcholar, by darkening the ſubject with too minute inquiries, almoſt loſes the ſight of it. In like manner, to apply thoſe inſtances to our preſent purpoſe, common Chriſtians may ſometimes better preſerve the true and right general notion of the doctrine of the Trinity, than the more learned inquirers: And it is obſervable, what Hilary of Poictiers, an honeſt and a knowing man of

the 4th century, teſtifies, that the populace of that time, for the moſt part, kept the true and right faith in the Trinity[a], when their miniſters, ſeveral of them, by prying too far into it, had the misfortune to loſe it.

While I am treating of the caſe of common Chriſtians, I cannot omit the mentioning an artifice much made uſe of by thoſe who would depreciate the doctrine of the Trinity, as not clear enough to be an important article: They firſt enter into all the niceties and perplexities which ſubtle diſputants have ever clogged the ſubject with, and then they aſk, whether common Chriſtians can be ſuppoſed to ſee through them. No certainly: neither need they trouble their heads about them. It is one thing to underſtand the doctrine, and quite another thing, to be maſters of the controverſy. It is not fair dealing with us, to pretend it neceſſary for every common Chriſtian, if he believes in the Trinity, to form juſt conceptions of it in every minute particular: For, by the ſame argument, it might as well be pleaded, that they are not obliged to believe in God, nor indeed in any thing. God is without body, parts or paſſions, according to the firſt article of our Church.

[a] Et hujus quidem uſque adhuc impietatis fraude perficitur, ut jam ſub Antichriſti Sacerdotibus Chriſti Populus non occidat, dum hoc putant illi fidei eſſe quod vocis eſt. Audiunt Deum Chriſtum; putant eſſe quod dicitur. Audiunt Filium Dei: putant in Dei nativitate ineſſe Dei veritatem. Audiunt ante tempora: putant id ipſum ante tempora eſſe quod ſemper eſt. Sanctiores Aures plebis, quam corda ſunt ſacerdotum. Hilar. contr. Auxent. 1266. Ed. Bened.

Church. How many minute perplexing inquiries might there not be raiſed upon the three particulars now mentioned? And who can aſſure us, that common Chriſtians may not be liable to entertain ſome wrong conceptions in every one of them? Muſt we therefore ſay that the general doctrine of the exiſtence of a Deity is not clear enough to be important doctrine, or that common Chriſtians are not bound to receive it as a neceſſary article of their faith? See how far ſuch objections would carry us. But ſince theſe objections ought to have no weight at all in other parallel caſes, or nearly parallel, they ought certainly to be the leſs regarded in reſpect to the doctrine of the ever bleſſed Trinity. Let but this doctrine have as fair uſage as other chriſtian and important doctrines are allowed to have, and then I am perſuaded, there will be no pretence left for ſaying, that it is not a clear doctrine, clear in the general, clear in the main thing, to any Chriſtian whatever. It is horrible miſrepreſentation of the caſe, to pretend as if we taught, that "the eternal intereſt of every "plowman or mechanick hangs on his adjuſt-"ing the ſenſe of the terms, Nature, Perſon, "Eſſence, Subſtance, Subſiſtence, Coequality, "Coeſſentiality, and the like." No; thoſe are technical terms, moſt of them proper to divines and ſcholars: And not only plowmen and mechanicks, but very great ſcholars too, lived and died in the conſcientious belief of the doctrine of the Trinity, long before any of thoſe terms

came in. They are of uſe indeed for ſettling the controverſy with greater accuracy among divines, who underſtand ſuch terms: But the doctrine itſelf is clear without them, and does not want them, but ſtands firm and unſhaken, independent of them. Any plain man may eaſily conceive, that Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt are properly divine, are not one the other, and yet are one God, by an intimate union; and that the Son in particular, being God and man, is one Chriſt. Theſe prime verities and whatſoever elſe is neceſſarily implied in them, may be conceived to be right; and whatſoever is contrary to them, or inconſiſtent with them, will of conſequence be wrong. This is enough for any plain Chriſtian to know or believe; and he is not ordinarily obliged to be more minute in his inquiries, or to underſtand ſcholaſtick terms. It is not to be expected that common Chriſtians ſhould be expert diſputants in controverſies of faith, any more than that they ſhould be profound caſuiſts in relation to practice: Yet chriſtian practice is neceſſary to ſalvation, and ſo is chriſtian faith too; and the obligation to obey a general precept, or to believe a general truth, is not ſuperſeded, or evacuated by a man's being unacquainted with terms of art, or by his being liable to miſtake in ſome remote, or minute circumſtances belonging to the doctrine itſelf.

To make the thing yet plainer, let us take ſome general rule of chriſtian practice; the rule, ſuppoſe, of *dealing with others as we would be*

be dealt with: A rule of ſuch importance, that, by our Lord's account of it, it is the ſum and ſubſtance of *The Law and the Prophets*[a]. Surely then, it is a rule deſigned for common Chriſtians, and ſuch as both deſerves and requires their moſt careful notice. Next, let us view this rule under all its minuteneſſes, or particularities; its diſtinctions, limitations, and explications, with which it is dreſſed out by knowing and able divines[b]. Obſerve thereupon, what an operoſe buſineſs is made of this ſo plain and familiar rule, what pains are taken to clear it of all ſeeming repugnancies, to make it reaſonable, to make it certain, to make it practicable, and to guard it moſt effectually againſt the many poſſible ways, whereby it may be miſconſtrued, eluded, perverted, fruſtrated. Are common Chriſtians equal to all thoſe niceties, or are they able to graſp them? I conceive not. And yet I dare be confident that a plain unlettered man, of tolerable ſenſe, and who has not a mind to deceive himſelf, might be ſafely truſted with the naked rule, and would but ſeldom, if ever, either miſunderſtand it (ſo far as concerns his own caſe) or miſapply it. He would keep the plain even road, and would ſcarce believe the man that ſhould tell him, that it was ſtrowed with thorns, or that hundreds had been, or might be either embar-

[a] Matt. vii. 12.

[b] See particularly Archbiſhop Tillotſon's Sermon on Matt. vii. 12. ſeparately publiſhed in 1709. And Collier's Eſſay of Honeſty, Part iv. p. 56, &c.

embaraſſed in it, or bewildered by it. The ſame thing is true with reſpect to the general doctrine of the Trinity. For though there are many poſſible ways of miſtaking it, or perverting it (as there are many crooked lines to one ſtraight) and it concerns divines to guard minutely againſt all; yet leſs may ſuffice for common Chriſtians; ordinarily, I mean at leaſt. The right faith in the Trinity is ſhort, and plain; and whatever croſſes upon it, is wrong: Index eſt rectum ſui, et obliqui: Truth ſhows itſelf, and is for the moſt part to every honeſt mind a guard ſufficient againſt the mazes of error.

I have dwelt the longer upon this article, becauſe the objection about common Chriſtians, appears a popular and plauſible one, and is often repeated in this cauſe, though there is really no weight in it. The author of the ſober and charitable Diſquiſition need not be in pain for common Chriſtians, leſt they ſhould not have ſkill enough to unite the two natures in Chriſt without confounding them, or dividing the perſon, in their apprehenſions [a]. They will as eaſily conceive that God and man is one Chriſt; as that ſoul and body is one man; and they need not look farther. Without troubling themſelves at all with the names either of natures or perſons they may joyfully and thankfully remember, that he *who is over all God bleſſed for ever* [b], became a man for their ſakes, and died for them, in order to bring them to God.

[a] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 22, [b] Rom. ix. 5.

God. What is there in all this, that ſhould either offend or perplex, or ſhould not rather greatly edify common Chriſtians? They may be more accurate in their thoughts on this head, than the great Patriarch and Abbot NESTORIUS and EUTYCHES[a], (for they were not both Patriarchs, as this author ſtiles them) becauſe they will indulge their fancies leſs, and reſt in the general truth, without drawing a falſe modus, or any modus upon it, either to corrupt, or to obſcure it: They will abide in the true doctrine, without defiling it, (as thoſe great men did) with over officious and preſumptuous ſpeculations. It may be allowed, that common Chriſtians have but very little apprehenſion[b] of ſome minute or remote conſiderations given in by way of anſwer to as minute and remote objections, in order to clear the doctrine in every punctilio: And in like manner, they have but very little apprehenſion of ſeveral ſuch remote conſiderations thrown in by divines, in their diſputes with Atheiſts or Deiſts, in order to clear the doctrine of the divine Being and attributes, or of the authority of Scripture, and to make every thing at length conformable and conſiſtent. But what then? does it therefore follow, that common Chriſtians may not believe in God, or in God's word, or that ſuch belief is not important? Common Chriſtians believe enough, if they believe the main things under a general view, without branching

[a] See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 22.
[b] See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 23.

branching them out into all the minute particulars, which depend upon them, or belong to them. Let divines ſee, that every article of faith is clear and conſiſtent throughout, when traverſed as far as the acuteſt objector can carry it: But let common Chriſtians be content with every article in its native ſimplicity, as laid down in Scripture for edification of the faithful, and not as it appears in controverſial books, or confeſſions, with all its armour about it, for the conviction or confuſion of gainſayers. But I am afraid I have exceeded on this head, and have overburdened the reader. Upon the whole, the doctrine of the Trinity muſt be allowed to be ſufficiently clear, as to the matter of it.

2. The next conſideration is, that it is clear alſo, as to the proofs upon which it reſts: It may be clearly proved, as well as clearly conceived. Indeed, the truth of the doctrine ought to be ſuppoſed in our preſent queſtion, as previouſly known and admitted. Accordingly, our remonſtrant brethren, who firſt diſputed the importance of our doctrine, made no ſcruple of allowing the truth of it, as I have before hinted. They allowed the ſcripture proofs to be ſo far clear, as to oblige us to admit the doctrine for a certain truth[a]. Neither

[a] Hinc colligo, mirum videri non debere, ſi tribus hiſce perſonis una eademque natura divina tribuatur, cum iis ſcriptura divina, iſtas perfectiones, quæ naturæ divinæ propriæ ſunt, tam exertè attribuat.

Epiſcop. Inſtitut. L. iv. Sect. ii. C. 32. p. 333.

Neither are we much beholden to them for this ſeeming courteſy, ſince the proofs are numerous, and ſo cogent, that every ingenuous and ſenſible man muſt plainly ſee, that were ſcripture alone to decide the queſtion, and no falſe philoſophy or metaphyſicks brought in to confound or perplex it, there could ſcarce be any room left for debate about it. I do not mean, that many ſcripture texts may not be ſpeciouſly urged on the other ſide: But what I mean, is, that upon the ſumming up of the evidence on both ſides, and after ballancing the whole account, the advantage is ſo plainly ours, according to all the approved rules of grammar or criticiſm, that there is nothing at all left on the other ſide, whereby to turn the ſcale, except it be ſome pretended abſurdity, or abſurdities, in point of reaſon, charged upon us, by the help of dialectical or metaphyſical ſubtleties; which yet, after all, are meer fallacy and ſophiſtry, and have no real ſtrength in them. We muſt therefore inſiſt upon it as certain fact, that our doctrine is clear enough, with reſpect to the ſcripture-evidences produced for it. Scripture in its plain, natural, obvious, unforced meaning, ſays it; and reaſon does not gainſay it: Upon theſe two pillars our cauſe reſts. Upon this bottom Biſhop Bull fixes it: "The Antitri-" nitarians can never produce a demonſtrative " reaſon to prove that it cannot be, and di-" vine Revelation aſſures us, that ſo it is[a]."

To

[a] Bull, Poſth. Works, Vol. iii. p. 833.

To the ſame purpoſe ſpeaks Mr. Howe: "That "there is a Trinity in the Godhead, of Fa- "ther, Son (or Word) and Holy Ghoſt, is "the plain obvious ſenſe of ſo many ſcrip- "tures, that it apparently tends to fruſtrate "the deſign of the whole ſcripture revela- "tion, and to make it uſeleſs, not to admit "this Trinity, or otherwiſe to underſtand ſuch "ſcriptures[a]." In like manner Dr. Burnet of the Charterhouſe, a noted man, and known to have had as little of a bigot in him, as any one, ſays thus: "We are obliged, according to that "light which God hath vouchſafed to us, in "the diſpenſation of the goſpel, to believe "and profeſs that Jeſus of Nazareth is the "Meſſiah, and likewiſe God. If we miſtake "in this faith, the miſtake is ſo far from "being voluntary, that it is inevitable. For we "follow, according to the beſt of our appre- "henſion, the guides which God has given us, "St. John, and Paul the apoſtle. To theſe "ſacred writers, we aſſent and adhere, inter- "preting them according to the genuine force "and received uſe of words: For neither Chriſt, "nor the aboveſaid writers have told us, that "thoſe ſacred oracles were written in any other "ſtyle, or that they were to be interpreted in "any other manner[b]."

The

[a] Howe's Calm Diſcourſe of the Trinity in the God-Head, p. 136, 137.

[b] Judgement of Dr. Thomas Burnet, p. 11, 12. Printed for Roberts, 1732.
See the Original. de Fid. et Offic. C. viii p. 134.
And compare my viiith Sermon, p. 276, 277, 278, 279.

The late learned Profeſſor Franck, of Hall in Saxony, ſpeaking to the Antitrinitarians, expreſſes himſelf thus, "Though you allow the ſcrip-"tures of the New Teſtament, you neverthe-"leſs boldly and arrogantly contradict the truth, "clearly ſhining before your eyes, and expreſs "teſtimonies propoſed in ſuch ſimple and plain "words, that even a child may read and under-"ſtand them[a]."

I cite theſe teſtimonies, not in the way of authority, but only to give the reader a clearer idea of what the Trinitarians go upon: For, they are all, ſo far, in the ſame ſtrain, and theſe teſtimonies are offered only as ſamples, whereby to judge of the reſt. Any indifferent ſtander-by may eaſily perceive, what, for the moſt part, has led the chriſtian world to contend earneſtly for the doctrine of the Trinity; namely, a conſcientious dread of diſhonouring him whom God the Father has commanded them to honour even as himſelf, a profound reverence for ſacred writ, and an invincible perſuaſion that thoſe Scriptures cannot, without the utmoſt violence, and moſt daring preſumption, be interpreted otherwiſe than they interpret them. It would be tedious here to cite the particular texts which we ground our faith upon; and it would be highly improper, to fetch-in the whole diſpute about the truth of the doctrine, into this other debate, which concerns only the

[a] Franck's Chriſtus ſacræ Scripturæ nucleus, p. 181, 182. Tranſlated out of German: printed by Downing, 1732.

the importance of it. Therefore referring the readers for the truth of the doctrine to other treatiſes lately printed, in great abundance, and well known, I ſhall content myſelf here with hinting two general arguments or conſiderations, ſuch as may give the readers ſome notion of the irreſiſtible force of our ſcripture proofs in this cauſe.

1. One is, that the proofs which we inſiſt upon, cannot be evaded by any approved rules of language or criticiſm, but the laſt reſort of our oppoſers commonly is to ſome philoſophical principle, ſome pretended reaſon, drawn from the ſuppoſed nature of the thing, rather than from the ſcripture ſtyle, or from the force of ſcripture expreſſions. I have obſerved elſewhere[a], that ſuch has been the method of eluding John i. 1. and ſeveral other texts, which are full and expreſs as poſſible, for the real and proper divinity of our Lord. They are eluded, I ſay, upon this principle, that perſon and intelligent being are equivalent and reciprocal; or that there can be no medium between Tritheiſm and Sabellianiſm, or by ſomething elſe of like kind: which is running off from the queſtion about the ſcriptural-proof of the doctrine, to the natural poſſibility of the thing; and is not ſubmitting to the obvious and apparent ſenſe of ſacred writ, but is tantamount to ſaying, that no ſcriptures can prove it: An evaſion which might

[a] Defence, Q. xxii. p. 327. Edit. 4.
Second defence, Q. xxii. p. 438. 2d Edit.

might equally ſerve for any texts whatever, were they ever ſo numerous, plain, and expreſs. This kind of conduct on the oppoſite ſide, manifeſtly ſhews how hard they are preſſed upon the foot of ſcripture; when, in the laſt reſult, they remove the cauſe from ſcripture to philoſophy, from conſiderations of language and ſtyle and propriety of expreſſion, to a foreign conſideration, the rationale of the thing. This is a plain token that the letter is againſt them; only, they take the reaſon of the thing to plead ſo much in their favour, that it ought to over-rule any force of expreſſion. So, they lay the main ſtreſs upon metaphyſical ſubtleties[a], that is to ſay, upon human conjectures about things naturally unſearchable, in oppoſition to the expreſs declarations of the word of God: which, by the way, is firſt ſetting up a falſe meaſure of truth; and, next, is making a new rule of faith. It is a falſe meaſure of truth, to make human conception the ſtandard of it, ſince there may be a thouſand, or ten thouſand verities, which we cannot account for, or explain the manner of: and it is making a new rule of faith, if we reſolve to believe nothing, but what we can comprehend; or if in caſes where we can ſee no plain contradiction or abſurdity, we chuſe to make the letter of ſcripture bend to our own conceptions, rather than ſubmit our wiſdom to the wiſdom of God. But this is not the

[a] See my Firſt defence, p. 328, &c. 480. Second defence, p. 4. 68. 113. 431. 438.

the point which I am now upon; and ſo it ſuffices to have briefly hinted it, in paſſing. The uſe which I intended of the obſervation in this place, was to intimate the ſtrength of our ſcripture-proofs, which drive the adverſaries to ſuch extremities.

2. Another yet more affecting and ſenſible argument of the ſame thing, is, that our antagoniſts, in eluding the ſcripture-proofs of the divinity of God the Son, have ſcarce left themſelves any for the divinity even of God the Father; indeed none but what by the ſame artificial way of eluding, may be evaded and fruſtrated, as well as the other. This is a conſideration of great weight, which has been preſſed upon them over and over[a], and has never yet received a ſatisfactory anſwer. So it remains as a ſtanding evidence of the glaring force of our ſcripture-proofs, and will ever remain ſo.

Upon the whole then, the doctrine of the Trinity muſt be acknowledged clear enough with reſpect to the ſcripture-proofs upon which it ſtands; provided always, that there is nothing plainly repugnant or contradictory in the notion. For, on the other hand, it muſt be allowed, that were the thing plainly abſurd or impoſſible, no ſcriptures could prove it; but, in ſuch a caſe, we ſhould be obliged either to deny the authority of ſuch ſcriptures (in whole, or

[a] Defence, p. 116.
Second defence, p. 245. alias 250, &c.
Third defence, p. 60, &c.
Compare Abbadie on Chriſt's divinity, p. 240.

or in part) or to have recourſe to trope or figure, or any poſſible interpretation to ſolve the difficulty. This is not the caſe here: And therefore ſince the doctrine cannot be proved to be impoſſible in the nature of the thing, it is abundantly proved from ſcripture to be both poſſible and true. Reaſon never has, never can demonſtrate the thing to be impoſſible: After repeated trials, 1400 years upwards and more, and all to no purpoſe, that ſhould now be looked upon as a ruled point[a]. I conclude then from what has been offered in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is clear enough to be important, both with reſpect to the matter of it, and the ſcripture-proofs upon which it ſtands: And therefore its pretended obſcurity, or uncertainty can be no ſufficient reaſon for throwing it off as a ſlight or indifferent article, not worth contending for, or inſiſting upon as an eſſential of faith, and a term of chriſtian communion.

CHAP. II.

Shewing, that the ſame doctrine is no SPECULATIVE *or* NOTIONAL *thing, but ſtrictly* PRACTICAL, *and cloſely interwoven with the principles of the* CHRISTIAN LIFE.

A RIGHT knowledge of God, and a practice conformable to it, and both in order to a more

[a] See the ſtate of the queſtion, as to the poſſibility of the doctrine, in Second defence, p. 329, and in Mr. Browne's animadverſions on two pieces, p. 5, 6, &c.

more compleat and bliſsful enjoyment, are not ſpeculative or indifferent matters, but matters properly practical and of infinite concernment. If religious practice in any meaſure depends upon a previous knowledge of God (as undoubtedly it does) then certainly, for the like reaſon, the perfection of that practice depends upon the perfection of ſuch knowledge. A general and confuſe notion of God may produce as general and confuſe rules of demeanour towards him; while a more particular and explicite apprehenſion of the Deity, will of courſe produce a more particular and explicite ſervice. It is true, where God has not afforded ſuch diſtinct knowledge, a leſs perfect ſervice may and muſt ſuffice: But wherever much is given, much will be required, and from peculiar circumſtances will ariſe peculiar obligations. If God be Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, the duties owing to God, will be duties owing under that trine diſtinction; which muſt be paid accordingly: And whoever leaves out any of the three out of his idea of God, comes ſo far ſhort of honouring God perfectly, and of ſerving him in proportion to the manifeſtation made of him. Suppoſing our doctrine true (as we are now to ſuppoſe) there will be duties proper to be paid to the Father as Father, and to the Son as Son, and to the Holy Ghoſt as the eternal Spirit of both; duties correſpondent to their diſtinct offices and perſonalities, beſide the duties common to all three, conſidered as one God. In ſhort, the ſpecification

tion of our worſhip, and the right direction of it, are nearly concerned in this doctrine: And therefore, if worſhip be a practical matter, this doctrine alſo is practical, and not a point of mere ſpeculation[a]. That worſhip is a practical thing, I ſuppoſe, no man of ſenſe will diſpute; or if any one does, it muſt be a diſpute only about words, not affecting the main thing: Wherefore, it muſt be altogether wrong to imagine, that the doctrine of the Trinity is purely nominal, or has no connexion with practice[b]. If the doctrine be true, it is ſacrilege, and great impiety in every Chriſtian to refuſe to worſhip Father, Son or Holy Ghoſt: But if the doctrine be falſe, it is polytheiſm, and idolatry to pay religious worſhip to any perſon but the Father only. So much depends upon this ſingle article.

The author of *Sober and charitable diſquiſition* labours this point extremely, for ſeveral pages together[c], and has perhaps ſaid as much and

[a] See Dr. Webſter's introductory diſcourſes to Maimburgh's Hiſtory of Arianiſm, p. 43, &c.

[b] Nihil falſius eſt ea Remonſtrantium calumnia, qua articulum de S. S. Trinitate ullum ad praxin uſum habere inficiantur. Omnis doctrina veritatis, ſecundum pietatem eſt. Tit. i. 1. Et hæc tam notabilis, tam fundamentalis, non eſſet? Imo totius fidei, totius veræ religionis ſcaturigo eſt.—Nulla etiam religio eſt, niſi quis verum deum colat: non colit verum Deum, ſed cerebri ſui figmentum, qui non adorat in æquali divinitatis majeſtate, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum ſanctum. I nunc, et doctrinam eam ad praxin inutilem eſſe clama, ſine qua nulla fidei aut pietatis Chriſtianæ praxis eſſe poteſt. Witſius in Symb. Apoſt. p. 76.

[c] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 4.—23.

and as well as the cauſe will admit of. He endeavours to clear the arian worſhippers of Chriſt from formal polytheiſm; and to retort the charge upon the orthodox worſhippers; that ſo upon conſideration that both parties may mean well, or in ſome reſpects may both offend, they may conſent to bear with each other, and to unite in chriſtian fellowſhip together. But, in my humble opinion, the thought is wide, and the project impracticable. There is no patching up any laſting or rational agreement of that kind, while the parties cannot unite ſo much as in the object of divine worſhip. He allows, that the oppoſers of Chriſt's divinity (properly ſo called) can pay him no more than inferior worſhip, ſuch as if tendered to God, would manifeſtly diſhonour and degrade him, would directly deny him to have divine perfections, and inſtead of honouring him as God, would degrade him into ſomewhat that is not God[a]. Can thoſe then who believe Chriſt to be God, and who honour him as ſuch, ever think it reaſonable or pious, to hold communion with men, who, by what they call inferior worſhip, do thus manifeſtly diſhonour and degrade their God and Saviour, denying his divine perfections, degrading him into ſomewhat that is not God? Can the catholick believers ever ſuffer, or connive at ſuch affronts offered (as they muſt eſteem them) to God bleſſed for ever? How can they ever

[a] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 8, 9.

ever juſtify either to God, or to the world, or to their own conſciences, ſuch a guilty neutrality in an affair of the higheſt conſequence, in an article of the laſt importance? Mutual forbearance in doubtful points of ſpeculative opinion, is very becoming fallible men, in conſideration of our common frailty; but it is unreaſonable, and morally impracticable, to come to any compoſition, where the parties differ ſo widely, and in ſo material a concern, as the object of divine worſhip. Religious men will be zealous for the honour of their Lord God, becauſe they know, that they ought to be ſo; neither will they, nor can they countenance any coldneſs or indifference in ſo weighty a concern. Exceſſive heats perhaps may ſometimes ariſe in ſuch caſes; for ſo long as religion is held in eſteem, and believed to be worth the contending for, there muſt be conteſts about it, which may ſometimes riſe too high: But it is an error on the right hand, and much to be preferred to a cold indifference: as a ſtrong athletick conſtitution, though ſubject ſometimes to fevers, is yet vaſtly preferable to a conſtant lethargy. To return, the ſum is, that the point of divine worſhip, is a critical point, a difficulty which cannot be got over, while both ſides retain their reſpective principles; one looking upon the Son and Holy Ghoſt as creatures, and the other eſteeming them as one God with the Father. For ſuppoſing that both parties were to join in the ſame ſolemn acts of outward

worſhip offered to Chriſt (for that he ought to be worſhipped both ſides allow) yet ſince the catholick ſide conceive that thoſe religious acts are on the other ſide defiled by an irreligious meaning, and amount rather to a ſolemn mockery of their God and Saviour, than to a reſpectful remembrance of him; and that they are in reality, though not intentionally, flat polytheiſm and idolatry; I ſay, while the catholick believers are ſo perſuaded, they cannot in prudence or in conſcience, in piety to God or charity to men, conſent to ſuch known defilements of their ſolemn ſervice; becauſe it would be directly partaking in other men's ſins. If it be ſaid, that they need not judge all creature-worſhip to be polytheiſm and idolatry; I anſwer, they cannot avoid it, while they conſider either Scripture itſelf, or the univerſal ſuffrage of antiquity in the beſt and pureſt ages. If it be further ſaid, that they need not however think ſo hardly of creature-worſhippers, as to charge them with guilt, ſince they may intend well; I anſwer, that a good intention is not ſufficient to warrant an ill thing: Beſides that, were they ever ſo guiltleſs, yet thoſe of a contrary perſuaſion could not be ſo in countenancing by their own communion, what they cannot but look upon as great impiety and profanation. So, turn we this matter which way we will, the point of worſhip muſt be a parting point betwixt them, while they retain their oppoſite ſentiments, with regard to the ſtrict and proper divinity of Chriſt.

I ſhall

I ſhall not here enter into the debate about creature-worſhip, having diſtinctly and fully conſidered it elſewhere[a]: Beſides, that I may properly wave it, as it is wide and foreign to the cauſe now in hand. For whether ſuch creature-worſhip be right or wrong, thoſe that believe in Chriſt as a divine perſon, cannot join with thoſe who worſhip him under the notion of a creature, and do not worſhip him as divine; becauſe, as it has been before intimated, ſuch inferior worſhip, (or whatever elſe we call it) is diſhonouring and degrading him, and cannot but be rejected with abhorrence by all that ſeriouſly believe him to be really and ſtrictly God.

As to what the author of *Sober and charitable diſquiſition* objects, that poſſibly ſome of our own people, who believe Chriſt to be God, may yet conſider him merely as man, or as mediator[b], and not as God, in their acts of worſhip, it may be purely a ſurmiſe: But however the fact ſtands, there is no argument in it. We cannot anſwer for vulgar Chriſtians, as to the notions

[a] Defence, Q. xvi. p. 229, &c.
Second defence, Q. xxi. p. 374, &c.
Compare Bull's Primitiva et Apoſtol. Traditio. C. vi. p. 386, &c.
Biſhop Smalbroke's Idolatry charged on Arianiſm.
Mr. Abr. Taylor's true ſcripture doctrine of the Trinity, p. 69, 448, &c.
Dr. Biſhop's Sermons, p. 271—281.
Archbiſhop Tillotſon's Sermons, Vol. I. p. 547, &c. fol. edit.

[b] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 21, 22, 23.

notions they may poſſibly entertain even of God the Father in their worſhip of him; neither can we be certain, whether ſometimes they riſe higher than thoſe of an anthropomorphite. But I preſume if any vulgar Chriſtians ignorantly or innocently miſtake, they are very willing to be ſet right by their more knowing guides, or by other ſenſible friends: which makes their caſe widely different from that of thoſe who take upon them to juſtify creature-worſhip upon principle, and who ſeparate Chriſt from the one Godhead in the worſhip of him, knowingly, and out of ſet purpoſe and deſign. We are not involved in guilt, merely by communicating with perſons, whoſe errors (though perhaps great) we know nothing of, or who probably would correct them upon better inſtruction, or the firſt gentle admonition. Guilt is contracted by communicating with thoſe who openly and reſolutely corrupt the faith (knowingly and ignorantly) in very important articles. To join with ſuch perſons, is partaking in their impiety: it is not charity, but men pleaſing, and betraying a diſregard for the honour of God. But this general queſtion will come over again, and will be more fully debated in a proper place.

Enough has been ſaid to ſhew, that Chriſtian worſhip is very nearly concerned in the queſtion about the Trinity; and therefore the doctrine is ſtrictly practical, and has a cloſe connexion with the chriſtian life. I decline entering into the main debate about creature-worſhip for the reaſons

reaſons above hinted. Yet becauſe the author of *Sober and charitable diſquiſition*, has advanced ſome things upon that article, which every reader may not know how to anſwer, I ſhall ſuggeſt a few conſiderations here by the way, to ſerve as hints or heads of ſolution, to the difficulties objected. 1. If that gentleman means to ſay, that the outward acts of civil homage, and religious worſhip are ſo equivocal and ambiguous, that there is no way left to diſtinguiſh them, it is diſputing againſt fact, and amounts to telling us, that no one can diſtinguiſh in a caſe where no one can eaſily miſtake, or ever has been miſtaken. Civil homage is diſtinguiſhable from religious worſhip, by the circumſtances[a] always, and often by the nature of the acts themſelves. That burning incenſe to Daniel[b] was merely civil reſpect, will not be eaſily proved: Neither will the example of an idolatrous king, who would have done as much to an image, be ſufficient to juſtify it; though the author ſpeaks of it[c], as if both theſe points were indiſputable. 2. Thoſe outward acts, ſo and ſo circumſtantiated, as to become religious worſhip, are what God has appropriated to Jehovah, to the true God, in the holy ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, as exterior and viſible acknowledgements of the divine ſovereignty over all

[a] See Stillingfleet's defence of the diſcourſe concerning Idolatry in works, Vol. V. p. 344, 357.

[b] Dan. ii. 46.

[c] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 6.

all creatures, and of the dependence which creatures have upon their creator: For, the reaſons which God inſiſts upon, why he, and he only is to be worſhipped, are ſuch as exclude all creatures whatever, viz. his being Jehovah, Creator, Suſtainer, Preſerver of all things[a]. 3. To pay theſe exterior ſervices, once ſo appropriated to God, to any creature, is idolizing the creature, or deifying the creature, and is both idolatry and polytheiſm. 4. Therefore the paying ſuch exterior religious ſervices to Chriſt, conſidered as a creature, muſt, according to the whole tenor of the Old Teſtament, be plain idolatry and polytheiſm. 5. The ſame rule for religious worſhip, obtains under the New Teſtament, as before under the Old: which appears, as from ſeveral other places, ſo particularly from our Lord's anſwer to ſatan[b], and from the angel's admonitions to St. John in the Revelations[c].

The author of *Sober and charitable*, &c. aſks, Why the paying worſhip to an inviſible Being, muſt imply its having divine perfections, and therefore muſt be divine worſhip[d]? The reaſon is, becauſe God has appropriated all ſuch addreſſes, ſo and ſo circumſtantiated, to the one Lord Jehovah; thereby making them (if they were not in their own nature before) a virtual recognition

[a] Iſai. xl. Iſai. xlv. 5, 6, 7. 2 Kings xix. 15. Jer x. 10, 11, 12, Compare my Sermons, p. 18, 19.

[b] Matt. iv. 10.

[c] Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. See thoſe texts fully explained in Biſhop Bull's Primitiva et Apoſtolica Traditio, C. iv. p. 388.

[d] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 8.

recognition of divine perfections[a]; and therefore they interpretatively amount to divine worſhip. He adds, that this is proving the point, by taking it for granted, that none but God is to be worſhipped. No, but it is proving the point in the beſt manner, and by the ſtrongeſt evidences, namely, expreſs ſcripture evidences, all the way from Geneſis down to the Revelations, of ſuch appropriation as hath been mentioned. In ſhort then, God has ſo appropriated religious worſhip, as to exclude all creatures from any ſhare in it: Therefore all religious worſhip is divine worſhip; and therefore to worſhip Chriſt, under the notion of a creature, is idolatry and polytheiſm. So ſtands this matter, which I have but briefly hinted, to take off this author's exceptions; referring the reader, as above, to other treatiſes, where the ſubject is conſidered at large[a]. Now I return to the point I was upon, the practical nature of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Beſides the influence which this doctrine has upon worſhip, it may be conſidered farther in a more general view, as tending to form within our minds diſpoſitions proper for ſuch ſtate and circumſtances as we are to expect hereafter. It is an allowed truth, that the good diſpoſitions which men contract in this life, are their qualifications for the happineſs of the life to come; and that the more refined and raiſed

[a] See preface to my Sermons, p. xlvii.

raiſed ſuch their good diſpoſitions are, the more fitly qualified they are for the higher degrees of bleſſedneſs in heaven. Put the caſe then, that the three perſons of the Trinity are equally divine, and that a man has been trained up to eſteem them accordingly, it cannot be doubted but that he goes out of the world more fitly diſpoſed, in that reſpect, to be taken in friendſhip, and beſt qualified (other circumſtances being equal) for the beatifick enjoyment. Conſequently, the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity (ſuppoſing it true) is no ſlight or inſignificant theory, no barren notion of ſpeculation; ſince it has a direct influence upon the diſpoſition of our minds here, and upon our happineſs hereafter. I make not this an argument of the truth of the doctrine, (for that is not the point I am now upon) but of the importance of it, after admitting it for a ſacred truth: And I add, that if it may have ſuch influence upon us in creating proper diſpoſitions, that comes to the ſame as to ſay, that it raiſes and improves our virtues, and all virtue is practical.

A further conſideration of like kind may be drawn from the influence which the ſame doctrine has upon the motives to chriſtian practice. There are no two motives more affecting or more endearing, or more apt to work upon ingenuous minds, than the love of God the Father in ſending his beloved Son to redeem us, and the love and condeſcenſion of our

our bleſſed Lord, in ſubmitting to be ſent. *God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*[a], &c. *In this was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him*[b]. We ſee here what a ſtreſs and emphaſis is laid, not merely upon this, that life, eternal life, is the benefit beſtowed, but that it is conveyed in ſuch a manner, and by ſuch endearing means, by the only begotten Son. The Socinians, when preſſed upon this article, do nothing but trifle and ſhuffle with us: They fall to magnifying the love of God, in giving us ſo high, ſo ineſtimable a bleſſing, as life eternal. Very true; but does not ſcripture, beſides that, lay a particular emphaſis upon the means made uſe of in conveying the grant? and how is this emphaſis made out upon their hypotheſis, that Chriſt is a mere man? But ſuppoſe him a creature, and the very firſt and higheſt of all creatures, before he came down from heaven; yet neither does that ſuppoſition ſufficiently anſwer the purpoſe. For, conſidering how honourable the ſervice was, and how unconceivably vaſt and large the reward for it, it might more properly be ſaid, that God ſo loved his Son, that he ſent him into the world, in order to prefer him to a kind of rivalſhip with himſelf, to advance him to divine honours, to make the whole creation bow

[a] John iii. 16. [b] 1 John iv. 9. comp. Rom. v. 8. viii. 32.

bow before him, and pay him homage and obeiſance[e]: And all this as the reward of his ſufferings of a few years; great indeed, but not apparently greater than many of his diſciples ſuffered after him, nor *worthy to be compared with the glory*[f] that ſhall accrue to every good Chriſtian, much leſs with that immenſe, that incredible glory, which was to accrue to him[g]. Now to me it ſeems, that the ſuppoſing Chriſt a mere creature, is a thought which mightily leſſens the force of the ſcripture expreſſions repreſenting God's ſending his Son, as an act of ſtupendous love to man, upon account of the dignity of the perſon by whom that ſalvation was to be wrought: So that denying the divinity of Chriſt robs us in part of one of the moſt endearing and affecting motives to the chriſtian life. Wherefore in this view alſo, the doctrine of the Trinity, if true, is both important and practical, as it raiſes the motives upon which chriſtian practice is built. I do not ſay, there

[e] Phil. ii. 10. Rev. v. 11, 12, 13. vii. 10.

[f] Rom. viii. 18.

[g] Equidem rem attentius perpendenti liquebit, ex hypotheſi ſive Sociniana, ſive Ariana, deum in hoc negotio amorem et dilectionem ſuam potius in illum ipſum filium, quam erga nos homines oſtendiſſe. Quid enim? Is qui Chriſtus dicitur, ex merâ dei εὐδοκία et beneplacito in eam gratiam electus eſt, ut poſt brevem hîc in terris Deo præſtitam obedientiam, ex puro puto homine juxta Sociniſtas, ſive ex mera et mutabili creatura, ut Ario-manitæ dicunt Deus ipſe fieret, ac divinos honores, non modo a nobis hominibus ſed etiam ab ipſis angelis atque archangelis ſibi tribuendos aſſequeretur, adeoque in alias creaturas omnes dominium atque imperium obtineret.

Bull, Judic. Eccl. Cathol. C. v. p. 313.

there would be no force in the motive conſidered in an arian view, and ſuppoſing Chriſt to have been a moſt excellent *creature:* But the force of it would be conſiderably leſs upon that ſuppoſition; and therefore, if the doctrine be a truth, it is a truth of ſome moment in a view to practice, as raiſing and inforcing the motives beyond what the other hypotheſis does.

So again the love of Chriſt towards mankind, appears in a much clearer and ſtronger light upon the trinitarian principles, than upon the anti-trinitarian. For if Chriſt was in the form of God, equal with God, and very God, it was then an act of infinite love and condeſcenſion in him to become man, and die for us: But if he was no more than a creature, it was no ſurpriſing condeſcenſion to embark in a work ſo glorious, ſuch as being the ſaviour of mankind, and ſuch as would advance him to be Lord and Judge of the world, to be admired, reverenced, and adored both by men and angels, God himſelf alſo glorifying him, and ſounding forth his praiſes through the utmoſt limits of the univerſe. Where is the condeſcenſion of a creature's ſubmitting to be thus highly honoured? or what creature could there be, that could modeſtly aſpire to it, or might not think it much above his pretenſions, or higheſt ambition[a]? In ſhort, "to

[a] Addo, neque ipſius Filii Dei unigeniti amorem et charitatem, erga nos homines (quæ etiam magnifice paſſim celebratur in

" to become man, to ſuffer and die for the re-
" demption of the world, and to be made the
" Lord and Judge both of the quick and of the
" dead, can be an act of condeſcending love
" and goodneſs only in God. So that to deny
" the divinity of Chriſt, alters the very foun-
" dations of Chriſtianity, and deſtroys all the
" powerful arguments of the love, humility, and
" condeſcenſion of our Lord, which are the pe-
" culiar motives of the goſpel[b]." If either the work of redemption was too big for a creature to engage in, or if the honours attending it were too high for a creature to aſpire after[c], then certainly

in S. Scripturis, ac maxime in loco illo Epiſtolæ ad Eph. iii. 18, 19.) clarè elucere, niſi concipiamus Filium Dei qui ante ſæcula ex Patre genitus eſt, per quem omnia facta ſunt, qui propter nos homines, et propter noſtram ſalutem, deſcendit de cœlis et incarnatus eſt, &c. At vero hoc modo—Filii Dei eminentiſſima in figmentum ſuum dilectio—, clariſſime conſpicitur. Bull, Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 311.

[b] Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, C. v. p. 268.

[c] Οἰκονομία, quæ ipſi tribuitur, θεολογίαν neceſſario ſupponit ipſamque omnino ſtatuit. Quid enim? Meſſiam ſive Chriſtum prædicant ſacræ noſtræ literæ et credere nos profitemur omnes, qui ſit animarum ſoſpitator, qui nobis ſit ſapientia, juſtitia, ſanctificatio, et redemptio——, qui preces ſuorum, ubivis ſacroſanctum ejus nomen invocantium, illico exaudiat——, qui eccleſiæ ſuæ per univerſum terrarum orbem diſſeminatæ, ſemper præſto ſit——, qui Deo Patri, σύνθρονος, et in eadem ſede collocatus ſit——. Qui denique, in exitu mundi, immenſa gloria et majeſtate refulgens, angelis miniſtris ſtipatus, veniet orbem judicaturus, non modo facta omnia, ſed et cordis ſecreta omnium quotquot fuere hominum in lucem proditurus, &c. Hæccine omnia in purum hominem, aut creaturam aliquam competere? Fidenter dico, qui ita ſentiat, non modo contra fidem, ſed et rationem ipſam inſanire.

Bull, Judic. Eccl. Cath. C. i. p. 291, 292.

tainly the very notion of condeſcenſion is ſunk and loſt, upon every hypotheſis which does not make Chriſt truly and properly God, God eternal. I am very ſenſible, that while I am arguing for the importance of the doctrine, I may ſeem at the ſame time to be pleading for the truth of it, and ſo to run unawares into the other queſtion. But the two queſtions are ſo nearly allied, that I know not ſometimes how to avoid it. The ſame conſiderations generally which prove one, muſt of courſe obliquely glance at the other alſo: and every ſcripture argument, which intimates the uſe and importance of the doctrine, muſt at leaſt tacitly ſuppoſe, or inſinuate the truth of it, and ſo in effect prove both in one. If ſcripture has laid down motives which are not naturally or reaſonably accounted for, or underſtood, but upon the ſuppoſition of the truth of ſuch a doctrine, then both the doctrine itſelf, and the practical nature of it, are at the ſame time inſinuated: Which I mention here once for all, to prevent confuſion, and now proceed to what remains.

The ſatisfaction or propitiation, for the ſins of the world, made by Chriſt, is of great importance to the chriſtian life, and ſeems alſo to have a cloſe connexion with the doctrine of the Trinity. The truth of the ſatisfaction, and the neceſſity there was for it, may be ſubſtantially proved a poſteriori, from ſcripture itſelf[a], independent of the doctrine of the Trinity. But after

[a] See a late rational and judicious Diſcourſe upon this ſubject, intituled,

after proceeding ſo far, it will be difficult to clear and extricate that ſcripture doctrine, without admitting this other alſo: Becauſe it is not reaſonable to think that an creature could do more than was his bounden duty to do upon God's requiring it; or that he could by any ſervices or ſufferings attain to ſuch a degree of merit, as ſhould atone for a world of ſinners; or that he ſhould be intruſted with ſuch an office (ſuppoſing him otherwiſe equal to it) as would of courſe draw after it the adoration and homage both of men and angels. The queſtion properly here, is not, whether any thing leſs than God could pay an infinite ſatisfaction, but whether a creature could pay any, or could merit at all. If it be ſaid, that God might accept it as he pleaſed, it may be ſaid likewiſe, upon the ſame principle, that he might accept the blood of bulls, or of goats. Yet the Apoſtle tells us, that *it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls and of goats ſhould take away ſins*[b]: which words appear to reſolve the ſatisfaction not merely into God's free acceptance, but into the intrinſick value of the ſacrifice. And while we reſt it upon that foot, I do not ſee why we may not ſay, that it is not poſſible for the blood of any creature to take away the ſins of the world, ſince no creature can do more than his duty, nor can have any ſtock of merit to ſpare for other creatures.

intituled, Jeſus Chriſt the Mediator between God and Man, printed for J. Noon, 1732.

[b] Hebr. x. 4. Conf. Pearſon on the Creed, Art. ii. p. 142.

tures. In this light, the ſcripture doctrine of the ſatisfaction infers the divinity of him that made it: and hence it is, that thoſe who have denied our Lord's proper divinity, have commonly gone on to deny any proper ſatisfaction alſo; or while they have admitted it in words, or in name (as they admit alſo Chriſt's divinity) they have denied the thing. Scripture itſelf ſeems to reſolve the ſatisfaction into the divinity of the perſon ſuffering. It was Jehovah that was pierced[d]. It was God that purchaſed the church with his own blood[d]; it was ὁ δεσπότης, the high Lord that bought us[e]: it was the Lord of glory that was crucified[f]. And indeed it is unintelligible, how the blood of a creature ſhould make any proper atonement or expiation for ſin, as before intimated. This again is another of thoſe arguments, or conſiderations, which at once inſinuate both the truth of our doctrine, and the importance of it. However, if ſcripture otherwiſe teſtifies that Chriſt is properly God, and if the ſame ſcriptures elſewhere, independently of our preſent argument, declare that Chriſt has atoned for us; then from theſe two propoſitions put together reſults this third, that a divine perſon has ſatisfied for us: conſequently, whoſoever deſtroys the divinity of Chriſt, juſtly

[c] Zech. xii. 10. compared with John xix. 37.
[d] Acts xx. 28. For the reading, conſult Mill in loc.
[e] 2 Pet ii. 1. See Taylor's true Scripture doctrine, p. 391, &c.
[f] 1 Cor. ii. 8. compare 1 John i. 7. Heb. ix. 14.

juſtly ſo called, does at the ſame time deſtroy the true notion of the ſatisfaction made by him. Hence it appears, at the loweſt, that the doctrine of the Trinity involves ſeveral other important doctrines of Chriſtianity with it, and gives another kind of turn and ſignificancy to them, than what they would have without it: and therefore, moſt undoubtedly, it is no barren ſpeculation, no indifferent or ſlight matter, but a doctrine of the foundation, nearly affecting the very vitals of Chriſtianity, and the chriſtian life.

The author of *Sober and charitable diſquiſition*, has ſpent ſeveral pages[g], to invalidate the argument drawn from the common doctrine of the ſatisfaction; and ſo I muſt ſtop for a while to examine what he ſays. He thinks it cannot be proved, that none but God could make ſuch ſatisfaction[h]. But I conceive, it may be proved from the nature of the thing, that no creature could merit; and from ſcripture, that he who made the ſatisfaction is God as well as man: and theſe two conſiderations taken together, do amount to what we pretend to. He himſelf allows, the truth of the aforeſaid doctrine once proved, the conſequence to be indiſputable, that it was ſome way or other neceſſary[i]. This indeed is not the whole of what we are able to prove, as may appear from what hath been ſaid: but even

[g] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 24.—35.
[h] Ibid. p. 24. [i] Ibid. p. 25.

even this is ſufficient for our preſent purpoſe; namely, that if our doctrine is true, it muſt be important, becauſe of the other important doctrines which hang upon it. Therefore the doctrine of the Trinity is no ſpeculative opinion of ſlight value or ſignificancy. If it be true, it is worth contending for, and earneſtly too.

He aſks, whether we are ſure, that no being inferior to God could make full amends to divine juſtice[k]? We conceive, with very good reaſon, that no creature could merit with God, or do works of ſupererogation. I paſs over what he obſerves about infinite ſatisfaction[l], not affecting the queſtion as here by me ſtated. He aſks, how we can be ſure, that God cannot accept of the ſacrifice of the beſt and moſt excellent of created beings? I ſay not, what God can, or cannot accept: I know nothing a priori about it. But ſcripture, as before obſerved, reſts not this matter upon the foot of divine acceptance, but upon the intrinſic value of the ſacrifice: and when we conſider the thing in that view, we ſay, that a creature's ſervices or ſufferings carry no proper intrinſic merit in them. And we add further, that God has accepted no ſacrifice leſs than a divine ſacrifice, becauſe we prove from other topics, that Chriſt our paſſover was ſtrictly God, and he was ſacrificed for us. In ſhort, the

[k] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 25.
[l] Ibid. p. 25, 26, 27.

the queſtion is not what God might have accepted, if he had ſo pleaſed, but whether, when he has choſen the way of expiation, and the ſcriptures lay a particular ſtreſs and emphaſis upon it, as carrying intrinſic merit in it, both real and great, whether this can be juſtly accounted for, on the ſuppoſition that our Lord was no more than a creature[m].

The author goes on to raiſe difficulties, and to advance divers ſubtleties to perplex the notion of a compound perſon: moſt of them, I conceive, run beyond the mark, and might as ſoon prove that ſoul and body make not one perſon or man, as that God and man make not the one perſon of Chriſt. For example; he pleads that a perſon compounded of God and man, muſt be inferior in dignity to a perſon wholly and only divine[n]. By the ſame argument, a man being partly ſpirit and partly body, is inferior in dignity to the ſeparate ſoul, which is wholly and only ſpirit: and if there be any force in the argument, I know not how far it may affect the doctrine of a future reſurrection. Now, we ſay, that the divine nature loſes nothing of

[m] Verbo dicam: nulli creaturæ, licet excellentiſſima ea ſit, excellentiſſimoque modo operetur, illud competat, ut vitæ æternæ præmium ei ex ſtricto jure debeatur. Præterquam enim quod bonum æternæ vitæ ſit abſolutiſſimum, immenſum, infinitum, atque adeo omnia omnium creaturarum opera infinitis gradibus tranſcendens; illud etiam Apoſtoli, ἐρώτημα tale eſt, ut ei a nemine reſponderi poſſit: τίς προέδωκεν αὐτῷ καὶ ἀνταποδοθήσεται αὐτῷ; Rom. xi. 35.

Bull, Harmon. Apoſtol. Differt. ii. C. 12. p. 409.

[n] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 29.

of its dignity by aſſuming the human; but retains all the dignity it before had; and therefore the whole perſon becomes not inferior. He further pleads, that it is not God that dies, but God-man. Allowed: but ſtill that perſon, that Chriſt, who is God, dies: as when a man dies, that perſon (who is ſoul, as well as body) dies. We never ſuppoſe that the godhead dies, any more than we imagine that the ſoul dies. He ſays further, that the perſon which makes the ſatisfaction, is not a divine perſon*. How ſo, when the perſon is both God and man, (as he had before allowed) in our ſcheme? Do we make two perſons? He argues next againſt the humanity becoming part of the perſon of Chriſt. Nothing can really be this *who*, but muſt be *the what this who is*, at the ſame time. He might as juſtly argue, that Peter's body cannot be part of Peter, or of the perſon of Peter, together with his ſoul: becauſe nothing can really be this *who* (Peter's ſoul) but muſt be what this who is, at the ſame time. Now taking for granted that Peter's ſoul is the whole perſon, the argument is good: and ſo it is likewiſe in the other caſe, taking it for granted, that the Logos in union, is ſtill the whole perſon; but this is going upon falſe ſuppoſitions: and he might as ſoon prove that Peter's body cannot be part of Peter, unleſs it be his ſoul, as that Chriſt's humanity cannot be part of Chriſt, unleſs it

* Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 30.

it be the Logos. I can hardly conjecture what the author means, when he ſays, *That* human ſubſtance we call John, is really the perſon and nothing elſe[p]. I thought, that John, or John's perſon, was made up of two ſubſtances, ſpiritual and bodily: and John, the perſon of John, dies, though one ſubſtance ſurvives. In like manner, Chriſt the god-man dies, though the godhead dies not. He adds, much like to what he had ſaid before, that the human nature can never be really *he*, unleſs he be alſo the divine nature. Does he mean by *he*, part of the perſon, or the whole perſon? If he means part, then it amounts to this; the body can never be really a part of Peter's perſon, unleſs it be Peter's ſoul: or if he means the whole, then it comes to this, that the body can never be the whole perſon, unleſs it be the ſoul. One of the propoſitions is manifeſtly againſt truth, and the other is not ſenſe: ſo little can be effected in this way of reaſoning. Indeed, all the confuſion ariſes from the want of knowing or conſidering what the true notion of a perſon, ſimple or compound, is, of which I have elſewhere treated at large[q], and thither I take leave to refer the reader. In the mean while, I cannot but heartily lament and grieve, to find that ſerious and ſenſible men can give their minds to oppoſe a ſcriptural and venerable doctrine which has ſtood the teſt of ages, by ſuch fine ſpun ſubtleties: Zeno's arguments againſt

[p] See Sober and charitable, &c. p. 34.
[q] Second defence, Q. xv p. 365—369.

againſt motion, might appear weighty in compariſon.

But we have more of the ſame kind ſtill, which I ſhall reply to very briefly. 'The dying humanity can have no ſuch dignity[r].' True, but the dying Chriſt might, and that ſuffices. 'The human nature ſhould really and truly be that divine perſon.' No: part of the perſon is ſufficient: the human nature conſtitutes one compound perſon with the divine nature. 'The Logos could not really be man.' Why? was not the word made fleſh? that is, the word became incarnate, aſſumed humanity. 'Humanity could not be aſſumed into a real communion of his perſon, without being aſſumed into what that perſon is[s].' He muſt mean, I preſume, without being converted into godhead. But why not, if bodies at the general reſurrection may be aſſumed into a perſonal union with ſouls, without ceaſing to be bodies, or being converted into ſpirits? 'For the ſame thing (perſon) to be God and man at once, that is really and truly ſo, is ſurely as impoſſible as tranſubſtantiation[t].' And yet ſurely it is not more impoſſible than for the ſame human Being (call him Peter or John) to be both ſoul and body at once, really and truly ſo; which a man may firmly believe as a certain truth, without admitting tranſubſtantiation, a palpable abſurdity. 'That man ſhould really and ſtrictly ſpeaking, be a divine perſon, or

[r] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 32.
[s] Ibid. p. 33
[t] Ibid. p. 34.

or a divine perſon man, to me ſeems utterly impoſſible[u].' If he means, that the divine nature is not the human, nor the human divine, he ſays right, and has no oppoſer: but if he means, that divine ſubſtance and human ſubſtance together, may not make one perſon, or one Chriſt, let him ſhow why it is more impoſſible than for a ſpiritual ſubſtance and a corporeal ſubſtance to make one perſon, or one man. He adds, or repeats, that 'the death of the man is not the death of God[w].' But it is the death of Chriſt, who is God and man. So the death of the body is not the death of the ſoul; but it is the death of the man, who is both ſoul and body. Such is the nature of a perſonal union, and ſuch the manner of ſpeaking of it; and it is ſo obvious and common a caſe, that none but philoſophers would miſtake it.

The author cloſes his diſcourſe on this head, with obſerving, that our oppoſers may carry the point of ſatisfaction as high as we do, and account as handſomely for it. As how? 'by ſuppoſing the Logos to be in as cloſe an union with God, as we ſuppoſe Chriſt's humanity to be with the Logos[x].' Well then, it muſt be a perſonal union, ſo as to make the Father and the Logos one perſon. How then? 'Then the ſufferings of the Logos will be as much as the ſufferings of God, and as much an atonement for ſin, as the death of Chriſt's human nature in

[u] Sober and charitable diſq. p. 34. [w] Ib. 34. [x] Ib. p. 35.

in the other ſcheme[y].' True: But then the ſufferings of the Logos will be the ſufferings of the Father (which is the ancient hereſy of the patri-paſſians) and the ſame perſon, both pays and accepts the ranſom, makes an atonement to himſelf, which is not conſonant to ſcripture, nor to common ſenſe.

The author concludes his account of this matter, with this inference, that the men whom he has been pleading for, do not ſeem ſo deeply culpable, nor ſo dangerouſly miſtaken[z], as is commonly repreſented. To me it appears quite the contrary; and from this very repreſentation of his, whereby he intended to favour them. They are deeply culpable, 1. For making God the Son a creature, againſt the whole tenor of ſcripture. 2. For running into patri-paſſianiſm, to help out arianiſm; heaping error upon error, hereſy upon hereſy. 3. For doing it, upon the ſtrength only of a few dialectical, or metaphyſical ſubtleties, ſcarce worthy to be offered, or ſo much as named, in ſo momentous a cauſe as this is. 4. For making uſe of ſuch topics againſt the perſonal union of God and man, as might with equal force be urged againſt the perſonal union of any two ſubſtances whatever, and prove (if they prove any thing) that an human perſon is not made up of ſoul and body. 5. For condemning their oppoſers as void of charity, only for their pious, faithful, and extremely charitable

[y] Sober and charitable diſq. p. 34, 35.
[z] Ibid. p. 35. [a] Ibid.

charitable endeavours to preſerve their flocks from being led aſide after ſatan, from imbibing ſentiments ſubverſive of the goſpel of Chriſt. But I ſhall have more to ſay upon the head of charity in another chapter. I hope my reader will excuſe my digreſſing thus far (if it be called a digreſſion) upon the article of ſatisfaction, to attend the author who gave the occaſion. Now I return.

I have been repreſenting the practical nature and important uſes of the doctrine of the Trinity, with reſpect to worſhip, in which all the three perſons are intereſted; and I have more particularly preſſed the importance of the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, from ſpecial conſiderations relating to the goſpel motives, and the nature of the atonement made for ſins. I ought not here to omit the like ſpecial conſiderations concerning the Holy Spirit, and the neceſſity of believing his divinity likewiſe. I ſhall chuſe here to expreſs myſelf in the excellent words of a celebrated writer, whom I have before quoted more than once. "Our ſalva-
"tion by Chriſt does not only conſiſt in the
"expiation of our ſins, &c.—but in commu-
"nication of divine grace and power to renew
"and ſanctify us: and this is every where in
"ſcripture attributed to the Holy Spirit, as his
"peculiar office in the œconomy of man's ſal-
"vation. And it muſt make a fundamental
"change in the doctrine of divine grace and
"aſſiſtance, to deny the divinity of the Holy
"Spirit.

" Spirit. For, can a creature be the univer-
" ſal ſpring and fountain of divine grace and
" life? Can a finite creature be a kind of uni-
" verſal ſoul to the whole chriſtian church, and
" to every ſincere member of it? Can a crea-
" ture make ſuch cloſe application to our minds,
" know our thoughts, ſet bounds to our paſ-
" ſions, inſpire us with new affections and de-
" ſires, and be more intimate to us than we are
" to ourſelves? If a creature be the only inſtru-
" ment and principle of grace, we ſhall ſoon
" be tempted, either to deny the grace of God,
" or to make it only an external thing, and en-
" tertain very mean conceits of it. All theſe
" miraculous gifts, which were beſtowed on the
" apoſtles and primitive chriſtians, for the edi-
" fication of the church, all the graces of the
" chriſtian life, are the fruits of the Spirit. The
" divine Spirit is the principle of immortality
" in us, which firſt gives life to our ſouls, and
" will at the laſt day raiſe our dead bodies out
" of the duſt; works which ſufficiently pro-
" claim him to be God, and which we cannot
" heartily believe, in the goſpel-notion, if he
" be not[a]".

What this excellent writer has here ſaid, appears all to be very right and juſt; and his obſervation of the doctrine of divine grace being likely to ſuffer much by a denial of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, has been too ſadly verified

[a] Sherlock's vindication of the defence of Stillingfleet, p. 270, &c.

verified in the event. How jejunely, how ſparingly, have the abettors of the new ſchemes inſiſted upon the doctrine of grace, and of the inviſible workings of the Holy Spirit, though ſcripture is full of the ſubject? So that, beſides the danger of loſing the ſalutary doctrine of a proper ſatisfaction and expiation, we are further in danger of loſing the true ſcripture notion of grace, by the oppoſition made to the doctrine of the Trinity. I believe I might appeal to the conſciences of thoſe gentlemen, whether their gratitude to Chriſt, for what he has done and ſuffered for us, be not in a manner loſt, and ſwallowed up in their regards to the Father for commanding, and accepting it; and whether the notion of the grace of the Holy Spirit, be not intirely abſorbed in the thought of the ſuperior aſſiſtance of God. The effect is natural, and I judge in this caſe, by what I ſhould find in myſelf. Upon their hypotheſis, *the grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghoſt* [b], will amount only to the love of the Father thrice told; which ſuperſedes both the other. And when it is ſaid, that the Father and Son will make their abode with us [c], and in the ſame chapter, that the Holy Ghoſt alſo will abide with us for ever [d], the two creatures ſo joined with the Creator, will appear to be not only improperly, but ſuperfluouſly added, while in one we have all, and there

[b] 2 Cor. xiii. 14. [c] John xiv. 23. [d] John xiv. 16.

there is nothing but that one to be at all depended upon. His preſence alone will ſupply every thing, and his luſtre will ſo far eclipſe both the other perſons, that it will be hard to ſay (upon the hypotheſis, I am mentioning) what occaſion there would be for them, or what comfort in them. Such is the appearing change made in the very form and eſſence of Chriſtianity by theſe new doctrines, that it ſeems to loſe the very life and ſoul of it, and by degrees to degenerate into little elſe but a better kind of Judaiſm, retaining ſtill the name of Chriſtianity, but giving up the main things.

While we conſider the doctrine of the Trinity, as interwoven with the very frame and texture of the Chriſtian religion, it appears to me natural to conceive, that the whole ſcheme and œconomy of man's redemption was laid with a principal view to it, in order to bring mankind gradually into an acquaintance with the three divine perſons, one God bleſſed for ever. I would ſpeak with all due modeſty, caution and reverence, as becomes us always in what concerns the unſearchable counſels of heaven: but I ſay, there appears to me none ſo natural, or ſo probable an account of the divine diſpenſations, from firſt to laſt, as what I have juſt mentioned; namely, that ſuch a redemption was provided, ſuch an expiation for ſins required, ſuch a method of ſanctification appointed, and then revealed, that ſo men might know that there are three divine perſons, might be ap-

prized how infinitely the world is obliged to them, and might accordingly be both inſtructed and incited to love, honour and adore them here, becauſe that muſt be a conſiderable part of their employment and happineſs hereafter. I urge not this as an argument of the truth of the doctrine, but as a conſideration of great weight, ſuppoſing the doctrine true, for the recommending it to our affections, and for the raiſing our ideas of it. The divine diſpenſations appear both rational and amiable, conſidered in this light: and if it be not too bold to offer any rationale of them, I would humbly preſume to ſay, that there is none ſo ſatisfactory, as what I have now mentioned. I can ſee no probable reaſon why the church of God ſhould be, as it were, firſt put under the immediate conduct of the Father, then under the Son, and laſt of all, under the Holy Ghoſt; nor why the honour of creating ſhould be principally aſcribed to the firſt, and the honour of redemption, as conſiderable as creation, to the ſecond, and the honour of illumination, ſanctification, and miraculous gifts, as conſiderable as any thing before upon the third: I ſay, I can ſee no probable reaſon for theſe things (when the Father, as it ſhould ſeem, might as well have had the ſole honour of all) but upon the hypotheſis which I have hinted[e].

But

[e] Ac profectò admiranda mihi videtur divinarum perſonarum in ſacroſanctiſſimâ Triade οἰκονομία, quâ unaquæque perſona diſtincto

But however that be, or whatever other reaſons divine wiſdom, to us unſearchable, might proceed upon in every diſpenſation towards mankind, certain it is, that the doctrine of the Trinity, if true (as we ſuppoſe) runs through every part of chriſtian theology, and gives as it were a new force and ſpirit to it.

I have been proving, from ſeveral topics, that this doctrine is important and practical, no ſlight, no ſpeculative opinion. I ſhall add but one conſideration more, and that a general one, applicable to all other articles of faith, and proving them to be practical in a large ſenſe of the word, but a juſt ſenſe too, and well deſerving our notice. As we are commanded to believe whatever God reveals, belief itſelf is an inſtance of obedience; and unbelief, much more diſbelief, is diſobedience to the commands of God. Conſequently, unleſs obedience and diſobedience are

diſtincto quaſi titulo humanum imprimis genus imperio ſuo divino obſtrinxerit, titulo illi reſpondente etiam diſtinctâ unius cujuſque imperii patefactione. Patrem colimus ſub titulo creatoris hujus univerſi, qui et ab ipsâ mundi creatione hominibus innotuerit; Filium adoramus ſub titulo redemptoris ac ſervatoris noſtri, cujus idcirco divina gloria atque imperium non niſi poſt peractum in terris humanæ redemptionis ac ſalutis negotium fuerit patefactum: Spiritum denique ſanctum veneramur ſub titulo paracleti, illuminatoris, et ſanctificatoris noſtri, cujus adeo divina majeſtas demum poſt deſcenſum ejus in apoſtolos primoſque Chriſtianos, donorum omne genus copioſiſſimâ largitione illuſtriſſimum clarius emicuerit. Nimirum tum demum apoſtoli, idque ex Chriſti mandato, gentes baptizabant in plenam atque adunatam Trinitatem.

Bull, primitiva Tradit. C. vi. p. 399.

are points of mere ſpeculation, there is no room left for any pretence of that kind in the caſe now before us. Let the matter of the belief be otherwiſe ever ſo ſpeculative, (though it is not the caſe here) yet to believe ſcripture verities, prime verities eſpecially, is under precept, is expreſs duty; and all duty is practical in a large ſenſe, as it is paying obedience to God's commandments. St. Paul therefore, more than once, ſpeaks of the obedience of faith[f], and with great propriety, ſince believing is obeying the will of God, and is intituled to a reward. It is true, faith and obedience (taking obedience in a more reſtrained ſenſe) are often contradiſtinguiſhed: but interpreting obedience in its fulleſt and moſt comprehenſive meaning; faith is properly a ſpecies of it, another kind of obedience. Faith is a virtue, both a moral and a chriſtian virtue, as a very ingenious and acute writer obſerves. "As "to the nature of faith, it is plain that it is a "moral virtue, as being that natural homage, "which the underſtanding or will (for I need "not here diſpute which[g]) pays to God, in "receiving and aſſenting to what he reveals, upon "his bare word, or authority: it is an humi-"liation of ourſelves, and a glorification of God. "And as it is a moral, ſo it is alſo a chriſtian "virtue, as being a duty commanded in the "goſpel,

[f] Rom. i. 5. xv. 18. xvi. 19. 26. Conf. Acts vi. 7. Vid. Wolfii curæ Philolog. et criticæ ad Rom. xvi. 19.

[g] See that point fully diſcuſſed in Fiddes's Body of Divinity, Vol. I. p. 333, &c.

" goſpel, and an act of chriſtian humility[h]."
If it be objected, that faith depends intirely upon evidence, and therefore is no matter of choice, and therefore is no virtue, nor can properly fall under precept; I deny that faith depends intirely upon evidence, though it ought to do ſo. There are motives to aſſent or diſſent, as well as rational grounds; and thoſe motives often bias and determine the judgement, either without reaſon, or againſt it: not that men can always believe what they will, but inclination frequently has a great hand in their perſuaſions. Men can lean, and will lean to the ſide which they happen to favour, upon motives of education, habit, authority, or example; or of intereſt, vanity, pride, paſſion, reſentment, and the like: and when they ſo lean to a ſide, they can be partial in examining, raſh in judging, or precipitate in reſolving; ſo that the will may much influence belief. And as to unbelief, or diſbelief, the influence is ſtill more apparent: for, excepting ſuch glaring facts as force aſſent, by obtruding themſelves upon the ſenſes, all other things almoſt may be ſlighted, and ſet aſide. A man may refuſe to attend to the cleareſt demonſtration, or may induſtriouſly perplex it, and never let in the light which might convince him of its truth: and what he may do in that caſe, he may much more eaſily do in others, where the evidence is not ſo bright, or ſtrong, or comes not up to perfect demonſtration. Theſe things conſidered,

[h] Norris's Chriſtian Prudence, p. 259.

conſidered, it muſt be allowed, that faith has at leaſt a great dependence upon the will, if it be not itſelf an act of the will, as appears moſt probable. Diligence in looking out for evidence, patience and perſeverance in attending to it, honeſty in conſidering, comparing, ballancing, and then determining on the ſide of truth, theſe are all matters of choice, depending on the will; and therefore a right faith is a ſubmiſſion of our wills in that inſtance, to God. Seeing therefore that chriſtian faith in general is virtue and duty, and therefore practical, it follows moſt evidently, that faith in the doctrine of the Trinity (ſuppoſing the doctrine true) is practical in its nature, is both moral and chriſtian duty.

Now to ſum up briefly what has been done in this chapter; it has been ſhewn, that the doctrine of the Trinity is of prime conſideration for directing and determining our worſhip, and that it influences chriſtian practice many ways, as forming proper diſpoſitions, as raiſing and ſtrengthening the goſpel motives, and as inforcing the doctrines of ſatisfaction made by Chriſt, and of illumination and ſanctification by the Holy Spirit; on all which accounts it appears to be ſtrictly practical, and highly important: and it has been further intimated, that all duty is practical, and that faith is duty; and therefore this faith, as well as any other, and becauſe of its important nature, more than many other.

other. I conclude therefore from the premiſes laid down in this chapter, that the doctrine of the Trinity is practical enough to be a fundamental article of Chriſtianity.

I muſt own, there is a narrow kind of ſenſe, and very improper, of the word practical, which I have obſerved in ſome writers, according to which the doctrine of the Trinity would not be a practical doctrine: for they mean by practical, what concerns practice between man and man, and nothing elſe. Such perſons would not ſcruple to ſay, that worſhip itſelf is no practical matter: and it muſt be allowed it is not in that ſenſe; it is not a duty of the ſecond table, but of the firſt. It may deſerve conſidering, whether that narrow ſenſe of the word practical might not firſt give riſe to the objection, that the doctrine of the Trinity is not practical but ſpeculative; conceiving every thing to be ſpeculative, excepting the common offices of life which we owe one towards another. Now indeed, according to ſuch interpretation of the words practical and ſpeculative, we ſhould never affirm, that this doctrine is practical, or deny that it is ſpeculative: for the duties depending upon it are branches of the firſt and great commandment, the love of God, and not of the ſecond, viz. the love of our neighbour. But what would all this amount to, more than to a diſpute about words or names? For we ſhould ſtill inſiſt upon it, that our doctrine is practical, as much as any duties of the firſt table are practical;

tical; which ſuffices: and ſo at length in a juſt and proper ſenſe of the word, the doctrine of the Trinity is practical enough to be a fundamental, if the love of God may be juſtly called a fundamental.

But when we ſpeak of the doctrine, we mean it of the general doctrine itſelf, not of the minute circumſtances, or appendages of it, which are either of a doubtful nature, or of ſlighter conſideration. For, "Though it is neceſſary, "and eſſential to the chriſtian faith, to acknow-"ledge Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt to be "one eternal God, yet there are a great many "little ſubtleties ſtarted by over curious and "buſy heads, which are not fundamental doc-"trines, and ought not to be thought ſo. God "forbid that all the nice diſtinctions and defi-"nitions of the ſchools, about eſſence, ſubſiſt-"ence, perſonality, about eternal generation and "proceſſion, the difference between filiation and "ſpiration, &c. ſhould be reckoned among fun-"damentals of our faith. For though we un-"derſtood nothing of theſe matters (as indeed "we do not, and it had been happy the church "had never heard of them) yet if we believe "the divinity of each perſon, we believe enough "to underſtand the doctrine of ſalvation. And "though that fatal diſpute between the Greek "and Latin church, about the *filioque*, be of "more importance than ſuch ſcholaſtic ſubtle-"ties, yet I cannot ſee that it concerns the "foundation of our faith. For the Greek "church

" church did firmly believe the Holy Spirit to " be true God, though they would not own " that he proceeded from the Father and the " Son, but from the Father only[i]. And though " we muſt acknowledge this to be a miſtake, " yet it is not a fundamental miſtake: for the " doctrine of ſalvation is ſecured by believing " the Holy Spirit to be true God, without de- " fining the manner of his proceſſion[k]." I may juſt take notice by the way, that the doctrine of the Trinity hath been but little befriended by the ſchoolmen; rather hurt by them[l], though they did not deſign it. For, 1. By bringing up all the difficulties and perplexities they could themſelves invent, or elſewhere meet with, they furniſhed out matter for the enemies of the faith to lay hold on; and it was from thence chiefly that the ſocinians afterwards borrowed their materials to work with. 2. In the next place, by overlarding a plain doctrine with diſtinctions and ſubtleties in great abundance, they diſguiſed and obſcured it, that it was not eaſy to ſee thorough the miſt they had raiſed. 3. Further by thus perplexing and diluting it, they really weakened it: for it is much eaſier to oppoſe it as it ſtands tricked up in that ſcholaſtic form, than as it ſtands in ſcripture and in the ancient Fathers. 4. They

[i] See my Crit. Hiſt. of the Athanaſian Creed, page 257, 2d edit.

[k] Sherlock's Vindication of the Defence of Stillingfleet, p. 273, 274. conf. Frid. Spanheim. F. tom. iii. p. 1212.

[l] See Dr. Berriman's Hiſtory of the Trin. Controverſy, p. 378, &c. Frid. Spanh. ibid. p. 1225.

4. They brought a kind of ſcandal and diſgrace upon the doctrine, as if it ſubſiſted chiefly upon ſcholaſtic ſubtleties; an imputation which the adverſaries to the chriſtian faith have eagerly laid hold on, and often invidiouſly charged upon the trinitarians at large; though nothing can be more falſe or injurious. The truth is, the very diſtinguiſhing character of the trinitarians, in the days of the fathers, was their reſting their cauſe wholly upon ſcripture and tradition; as the diſtinguiſhing character of the antitrinitarians, was their building moſtly upon logical or metaphyſical quirks and ſubtleties[m]. What a ſtring of thoſe wanton levities have we in Aetius, preſerved and anſwered by Epiphanius[n], enough to fright any common reader, or to nauſeate any man of good ſenſe. The like we have again in Eunomius, anſwered by Baſil, and by Gregor. Nyſſen. The catholics ſcarce ever ran out into metaphyſical notions, or expreſſions, excepting in two caſes, and both in the way of ſelf-defence. One was, when they were attacked with falſe metaphyſics, they then laboured to anſwer them with true, leſt the adverſaries ſhould triumph on that head, and ſeduce the populace. The other was, when the ſcriptural and cuſtomary expreſſions, which were uſed to convey a good ſenſe, and could juſtly bear no other, were perverted to a bad one by equivocation and wile; the church

[m] See Socrat. E. H. l. v. C. 10. Hieron. contr. Lucifer. tom. iv. par. 2. col. 296. Ed. Bened.

[n] Epiphan. Hæreſ. 76. p. 924, &c.

church could then have no ſo effectual ſecurity againſt falſe doctrines and falſe teachers creeping in among them, to corrupt the faith, and to beguile the unwary, as by adopting ſome new terms, and choſen expreſſions, for the ſupporting old truths°. This latter caſe is ſo naturally repreſented by a modern writer, that I ſhall take the freedom to borrow his words, for the ſake of laying it in the moſt lively manner before the reader. "Let me ſuppoſe an arian "ſtanding before you, and ſubmitting himſelf "to your examination, you aſk him, whether "he believes Chriſt to be God? He anſwers "in the affirmative. You again enquire, what "kind of God he ſuppoſes him to be? He re"plies, ſuch a God as the bible makes him. "This, you will complain, is colluſive language; "however, you requeſt him to ſatisfy you, whe"ther he believes the Son to be truly and pro"perly God? To this he ſaith, *yes*, conſiſtently "enough with his own notion of God, though "not with yours. But you farther aſk, does he "believe him to be likewiſe one with the Father? "To this he replies, in the affirmative. You then "preſs him with another queſtion, How is he "one with the Father, is he of the ſame eſſence "with the Father? To this the arian anſwers, "by aſking you what you mean by eſſence? "If you comply with his deſire, and explain "your

° See Dr. Berriman's Hiſtory of the Trinitarian Controverſy, p. 174—179.

" your notion of the term, you are unavoid-
" ably drawn into metaphyſical points[p]." Thus we ſee, metaphyſical terms may be ſometimes uſed by the orthodox ſide, when it is unavoidable; that is, when it is neceſſary to guard againſt equivocation and diſguiſe, for the preſerving the true faith, and for the excluding ſuch miniſters as would corrupt the goſpel truths, and miſlead the people committed to their care. But then it is wrong to blame thoſe honeſt and conſcientious guides for making uſe of the only remedy which is left them, and which nothing but the utmoſt neceſſity, brought upon them by the prevarication of others, would ever make them chuſe. It is plain by this and the like inſtances, that they are not fond of metaphyſics, not ſo much as of the terms: nor would there be any occaſion for new words, or any uſe of them, if many had not learned to undermine the ancient faith, by affixing new and wrong ideas to the ancient forms. The very nature of the thing ſpeaks itſelf: and the like methods have been uſed in moſt other forms and teſts, as daily experience has ſhewn the neceſſity of it. Thus, to inſtance in the common caſe of oaths to a government, they are uſually worded in as full and expreſſive terms as can be deviſed: and yet that ſometimes is not thought ſufficient, unleſs it be further added, without any equivocation, or mental reſervation, or

[p] Reply to Mr. P. C.'s Letter, p. 11, 12.

or ſomething of like kind. I aſk my reader's pardon for digreſſing a while from the particular point I was upon: but theſe reflections came naturally in my way, and may perhaps be of uſe as to the main thing: and now I paſs on to a new chapter.

CHAP. III.

Shewing, that the doctrine of the Trinity is ſufficiently inſiſted upon in ſcripture to be deemed an article of prime importance.

OUR diſpute muſt here be with the Dutch remonſtrants. The moſt celebrated men amongſt them, were Epiſcopius, and Limborch. I ſhall conſider them both with care; that it may be ſeen by the things wherein they agree, what it is that both aim at, and by the points wherein they differ, how both of them were at a loſs for any ſound principle of reaſon to proceed upon: and the concluſion which perhaps may naturally reſult from all, will be this, that they had ſome motives or ſpecious colours, for the perſuaſion which they jointly entertained, but no rational grounds for it.

1. I begin with the learned Epiſcopius, as the principal man. The ſum of what his ſentiments on this head amount to, is, that the doctrine of the Trinity, as to the main ſubſtance of it, is certain and clear, but yet not neceſ-

ſary

ſary to be believed in order to ſalvation, nor important enough to juſtify an anathema againſt the impugners of it, or for the rejecting their communion.

Firſt, I ſay, he admits our main doctrine as true and certain, being plainly taught in ſcripture. This appears from the confeſſion of the remonſtrants, where the doctrine is taught in full and ſtrong terms[q], as likewiſe from other places in Epiſcopius's works[r]. Next, I obſerve, that in his diſcuſſion of the queſtion of the perſpicuity of ſcripture, againſt Bellarmin, he declares that the doctrine of the Trinity (ſuch no doubt he muſt mean as the remonſtrant's confeſſion, and his own other writings contain) is clear, perſpicuous and eaſy to be underſtood[s].

Notwithſtanding

[q] Cæterum diſtincte ac relate conſideratur Deus ſub Trinâ hypoſtaſi, ſive tribus perſonis.——Solus Pater originis omnis expers—ſed qui deitatem tamen ſuam, tum Filio unigenito,—tum etiam Spiritui ſancto—ab æterno communicavit.—Filius ergo et Spiritus ſanctus ejuſdem cum patre deitatis, ſeu divinæ eſſentiæ ac naturæ, abſolute ac communiter conſideratæ, conſortes ſunt: prout, inter alia, maxime probatur ex divinis nominibus, ſeu titulis, item ex divinis proprietatibus, ex operationibus, quæ utrique in ſacris literis apertè paſſim tribuuntur. Remonſtrat. Confeſ. C. iii. apud Epiſcop. Op. Vol. p. 78.

[r] Certum eſt tribus hiſce perſonis divinitatem, ſive divinas perfectiones in ſcripturâ tribui. Epiſcop. Inſtit. L. iv. p. 330.

Mirum non videri debere, ſi tribus hiſce perſonis una eademque natura divina tribuatur, cum iis ſcriptura divinas iſtas perfectiones, quæ naturæ divinæ propriæ ſunt, tam exerte attribuat. Epiſcop. ibid.

[s] Atqui, ait, ſcriptura tradit ſumma myſteria. Quæ, inquam, illa? Primo, ait, de divinâ Trinitate. Atqui ea, prout ſcriptura tradit, nego obſcura, nedum obſcuriſſima eſſe. Addo, ea clara, perſpicua et facilia intellectu eſſe, prout et quatenus ea in ſcriptura traduntur. Epiſcop. Inſtit. L. iv. C. 18. p. 269.

Notwithſtanding all this, the ſame Epiſcopius was pleaſed to deny the neceſſity of believing the eternal generation of the Son (which with him appears to be the ſame with his eternal exiſtence[t]) and conſequently, the neceſſity of believing the received doctrine of the Trinity. And he denied the neceſſity of ſo believing, as for ſeveral other reaſons, ſo principally for this, becauſe the ſcripture had neither directly, nor indirectly declared the neceſſity of the doctrine, though it had taught the truth of it[u].

But then again, I muſt obſerve of him, that he ſeems to me, not ſo properly to have denied the neceſſity of believing that doctrine (in our ſenſe of neceſſity) as the neceſſity of pronouncing an anathema upon the impugners, which he conceived muſt follow upon the other, and which he interpreted to ſuch a rigid ſenſe, as to mean ſentencing the men directly to hell fire, or to everlaſting damnation. This laſt particular, was what he chiefly, or ſolely heſitated upon when he came to explain; or he would be thought, at leaſt, to mean no more; as appears

[t] See Addenda, p. 496.

[u] Hactenus ergo de veritate articuli hujus agimus, reſtat, ut videamus de ejus credendi neceſſitate.——Argumenta pro parte negante mihi longe videntur præponderare. 1. Quia nuſpiam in ſcripturâ id neceſſariam conſequentiam ex eâ elicitur.

Epiſcop. Inſtit. L. iv. C. 34. p. 338.

Certum eſt iis, qui ſic errant, in ſcripturis nuſpiam, nec diſerte, neque in terminis, neque per manifeſtam conſequentiam, Anathema dici. Quod autem in ſcripturis non eſt, etiamſi veriſſimum ſit, neceſſarium tamen dogma non eſſe ipſi doctores in ſynopſi ſuâ adferunt. Epiſcop. Opp. Vol. ii. p. 259.

pears from his own words, in his anſwer to the Leyden divines[w]; as alſo from his manner of wording the queſtion in his Inſtitutions[x], and elſewhere[y].

But that Epiſcopius did not deal fairly and uprightly in this matter, may be made appear from ſeveral conſiderations, as, 1. Becauſe he aggravated the buſineſs of an anathema, beyond what he had reaſon for; which makes it look like pretence. 2. Becauſe he was not conſiſtent with

[w] Author iſte diſerte et in terminis Socinianos inter eos collocat quibus ſalus abjudicanda non eſt. Id nuſpiam fecerunt Remonſtrantes. At anathema illis non dicunt. Eſto: ſed nec negant anathema illis dicendum eſſe. Quid ergo? ἐπέχουσι, neutrum dicunt.—Ne quid præcipitent, malunt relinquere tam ſeverum ac grave judicium Deo et tempori uſque dum cauſas ſatis graves habebunt, ut in alteram partem cum certâ animi fiduciâ deſcendant.—Ex altera parte occurrere vident diram ac funeſtam anathematis, atque æternæ condemnationis ſententiam: a quâ tantopere ſe abhorrere profitentur, ut eam niſi pleniſſimè perſuaſi ferre non audeant adeoque ferre illicitum ſibi credant. Epiſcop. Reſponſ. ad ſpecim. calumn. p. 295.

[x] Utrum ſcilicet præciſe ad ſalutem ſcitu et creditu neceſſarium ſit, Jeſum peculiari iſto quem adſtruximus modo Filium Dei eſſe, iiſque qui id negant, aut in dubium vocant, ac proindè id confiteri non audent, anathema ſit dicendum?

Epiſcop. Inſtitut. L. iv. C. xxxiv. p. 338.

[y] Stabat jam animo Remonſtrantium hæc ſententia; nulli doctrinæ, nulli homini anathema dicere, niſi cui Deus ipſe anathema dicit, vel expreſſis verbis, vel ſic, ut per conſequentiam omni exceptione majorem, et cuivis obviam, id Deum dicere colligi poſſit. Deum non reperiunt anathema dicere, &c.—Abſit a Remonſtrantibus, ut tam promptam habeant ſpongiam quâ ex albo vitæ æternæ infinitas animarum alioquin ſanctiſſimarum myriadas expungant, ob ignorantiam earum rerum, quæ ſufficiunt ad doctiſſimi cujuſque induſtriam exercendam ut eas poſſint intelligere, aut ſi forte eas intelligant, adeo tenues ac ſubtiles ſunt ut eas perſuadere aliis pæne impoſſibile ſit. Apolog. pro Confeſſ. Remonſtrant. p, 136.

with himſelf, either in his doctrine or conduct. 3. Becauſe he has laid down a very fallacious rule for judging of neceſſaries. 4. Becauſe he has done the like in other inſtances alſo, and with as little reaſon, only to afford ſhelter for the ſocinians.

1. I ſay, firſt, he has aggravated the matter of an anathema, beyond what he had reaſon for. When St. Paul delivered over to Satan, the deſign of it was kind and ſalutary, that *The Spirit might be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*[z]. If men muſt not have warning given them of their evil ways, all friendly reproof is at an end; and it will be unlawful to tell them, however juſt or neceſſary the occaſion be, that they are in a dangerous ſtate, and upon the verge of deſtruction. The declaring ſuch a caſe publicly, if it be right and true, is an eminent act of charity both to them, and to the world.

But further; every anathema upon the doctrine, is not an anathema, in Epiſcopius's ſenſe, upon the perſons teaching it[a]. The doctrine may be cenſured as pernicious and deteſtable, and yet the patrons of it believed to be in a ſalvable ſtate, on account of invincible ignorance, or prejudices, or ſome unhappy warmth of temper, or

[z] 1 Cor. v. 5.

[a] Diſtinguendum judicium de hominibus, a judicio de rebus ipſis. De hominibus, præſtat judicium cohibere, eoſque Dei judicio relinquere, ſaltem niſi apertiſſimæ judicandi rationes adſint: de rebus ipſis, dogmatibus nempe, cultibus, regimine, ex Dei verbo judicare licet.

Alphonſ. Turretin. de Articul. Fundament. p. 39.

or enthuſiaſtic diſorder of mind. It is no certain conſequence, that we muſt therefore condemn the men to hell-fire, or preſume to eraſe them in our opinion out of the book of life, only becauſe we pronounce their doctrines falſe, or wicked, or ſubverſive of the goſpel[b].

Farther, merely renouncing, or refuſing communion with ſome perſons, may ſometimes not amount to any judicial cenſure at all, but may be only taking due care of our own ſalvation, and conſcientiouſly providing that we be not found partakers in other men's ſins.

Theſe things conſidered, it is plain that Epiſcopius's ſo tragical exclamations againſt denouncing an anathema upon the ſocinian doctrines, or againſt renouncing communion with the men, were carried too far, and aggravated beyond reaſon. He might have condemned their doctrines as pernicious or dangerous; and he might have declared the doctrine of the Trinity highly important, or generally neceſſary to ſalvation, without paſſing any ſuch terrible ſentence upon particular men: which yet if he had, might reaſonably have been conſtrued as no more than a friendly warning, and a declaration of his ſenſe.

2. I

[b] Adeſt quippe, ut in vitiis, atque peccatis, ita ut in ignorantiâ atque erroribus, duplex remedium: alterum ex parte noſtrâ, nimirum Pœnitentia, ſeu generalis ſeu particularis; alterum a parte Dei, putà ejus miſericordia; quorum ope ut peccatis graviſſimis, ita et graviſſimis erroribus veniæ locum dari poſſe, a nemine negari poteſt. Alphonſ. Turretin. de Articulis Fundamental. p. 5.

2. I obſerve farther, that he was not very conſiſtent with himſelf, either in his doctrine, or his conduct, ſo far as concerns our preſent article. It appears from the public confeſſion of himſelf and friends, and from what I have cited beſides, that he held the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly received, to be true, certain, and clear: and yet when he comes to juſtify himſelf in his refuſing to condemn the ſocinians, or their doctrines, there he falls to talking of the obſcurity of thoſe articles which the ſocinians rejected, ſuch as few beſides the learned were able to underſtand, ſcarcely they, and fewer could believe[c]. Now one would be glad to know of what kind of things he is there ſpeaking. If he intends his reflexion upon the appendages to the main doctrine, or upon ſcholaſtic ſubtleties, (ſome true and ſome falſe) thoſe were not the things, or however not the only things, which any one could blame the ſocinians for rejecting; ſo that this kind of excuſe is intirely wide and foreign, and the making uſe of it is playing upon his readers; but if he means the main doctrine of the Trinity, for the rejecting whereof the ſocinians highly deſerved cenſure, why does he here repreſent it as obſcure, or ſcarce credible, when at other times, he admits it as a clear and a certain truth? I ſee no way of reconciling Epiſcopius to Epiſcopius, in things ſo contradictory and inconſiſtent.

As

[c] See the laſt quotation from the Apology, &c.

As to his conduct, there was a farther inconſiſtency, in his condemning the calviniſtical doctrines of abſolute predeſtination, &c. as impiety, and blaſphemy, and that publicly, and yet refuſing to do the like by the ſocinian tenets, which certainly had no more claim to favour than the other. And how far was ſuch a cenſure ſhort of denouncing an anathema againſt the calviniſts for holding them; though at the ſame time he profeſſed, not to pronounce any anathema where God had not pronounced one? Where could he find any ſcripture anathema againſt abſolute predeſtination (though I muſt own I diſlike the doctrine, as well as he) or where could he find it ſaid in terms, or by plain conſequence, that it is neceſſary to ſalvation to believe it conditional, more than he might find for the belief of the doctrine of the Trinity alſo, if he pleaſed? His conduct therefore appears, in that inſtance, to have been inconſiſtent, and not of a piece with itſelf. It was objected to the remonſtrants[d] that they made blaſphemers of the calviniſts, but eaſily paſſed over the ſocinians without ſuch cenſure: and all the excuſe made for it, was, that the calviniſtical doctrines were

[c] Secundum membrum eſt, quod Remonſtrantes, cum in declaratione ſententiam ſuam de prædeſtinatione et articulis ei annexis declarent, doctrinam Eccleſiarum Reformatarum non modo κατ' ἀντίθεσιν rejiciant, ſed eam quoque impietatis ac blaſphemiæ condemnant; in hac tamen doctrinâ (Sc. Trinitatis) hæreticos nullos, aut hæretica nulla dogmata improbent, damnent, aut anathemate percutiant.

Vid. Apolog. pro Confeſs. Remonſtr. p. 135.

were very notorious, and the calviniſts had been very ſevere, cruel, and inhuman in their way of ſupporting them[e]. But ſurely, the ſocinian blaſphemies were as notorious as any could be: and how could the calviniſtical doctrines (ſuppoſing them bad) be ever the worſe, or amount to blaſphemy or impiety ever the more, for the cruelty of their patrons and abettors? There is no juſt or conſiſtent account to be given of this unequal conduct, except it be this; that blaſphemies of adverſaries (ſuppoſing them ſuch) are real blaſphemies and deſerve an anathema; but blaſphemies of friends, or of brethren in affliction, are innocent and deſerve no anathema at all. When the remonſtrants have ſaid all they can, they will not be able to perſuade the chriſtian world, that thoſe calviniſtical doctrines (though I take them to be wrong) are worſe than the ſocinian; or that a charge of horrid impiety,

[e] Nec enim mirum eſt Remonſtrantes doctrinam iſtam calviniſticam rejeciſſe paſſim in ſuâ declaratione, et quæ ex eâ conſequuntur, impietates et blaſphemias damnaſſe ex profeſſo, a cæteris autem ex profeſſo damnandis abſtinuiſſe. Iſtud ut facerent, graviſſimas cauſas habebant: nam ſententia iſta hæretica Calvini jam nota erat, vel pueris a furno et lacu redeuntibus: patroni ejus non damnaverant tantum contrariam veritatem, ſed etiam intolerabilem eccleſiis ſuis judicaverant: profeſſores exauthoraverant, &c.—Iſtam ſententiam ut coloribus ſuis ad vivum depingerent (Remonſtrantes) neceſſarium erat; idque eo magis quod eam, prout jacet, peſtem credant, et venenum religionis omnis, cum quâ forte hæreſis nulla alia comparari mereatur; et tamen nihilominus eam, ut fundamentum et baſin religionis pene totius Chriſtianæ ſtatui et propugnari videant.

Apolog. pro Confeſ. p. 135, 136.

impiety, blaſphemy, peſt, poiſon, and hereſy, is juſtifiable in one caſe, and not in the other. So that upon the whole, it might be very eaſy to retort upon the remonſtrants their own tragical exclamations againſt denouncing an anathema: for let them but have the direction of it, and they diſcover no averſion to it upon weighty occaſions, as to them appear; and in doctrines which they judge to be of great importance, they could be very ſmart and ſevere in their cenſures.

3. But the moſt material thing of all, is to examine Epiſcopius's rule for determining neceſſaries, which ſeems to be very fallacious. He would have a thing declared neceſſary in ſcripture, either expreſly, or by plain conſequence. Here I know not what he would call a plain conſequence: otherwiſe indeed, the rule may be very juſt. I take it, if the truth of a doctrine be fully and plainly taught in ſcripture, and it appears from the nature and quality of the doctrine itſelf, that it is important, and that much depends upon it, that then ſcripture has by plain conſequence declared the neceſſity of believing ſuch doctrine, by declaring its truth. If the rule be thus interpreted, then by the ſame rule, the doctrine of the Trinity is important in a ſcripture view, and ought to be reckoned among the neceſſaries. By Epiſcopius's own account of it (as before obſerved) it is true, it is certain, it is clear, as proved from ſcripture; and by many arguments recounted in the laſt chapter, it

it has been ſhewn that it influences our worſhip, and bears a conſiderable part in what concerns the chriſtian life: therefore ſcripture in making known this doctrine, has by plain conſequence taught us the neceſſity of believing it, and the danger of rejecting it. If men have the uſe of their rational faculties, and are able to argue and infer, they need not be expreſsly told that ſuch a doctrine as that is, is important and weighty, and worth the contending for: let but ſcripture once aſcertain its truth, and every man's common ſenſe will ſupply the reſt.

When St. Paul was minded to convince the Corinthians of the neceſſity of believing the reſurrection of the dead, he thought it ſufficient to ſhew the connexion which that doctrine had with Chriſtianity itſelf; to intimate, that their other faith was vain without that, and all preaching vain[1]; and that the denying that doctrine, was in effect, denying the whole chriſtian religion. Therefore that doctrine was neceſſary in the higheſt degree, as common ſenſe muſt conclude: the very nature of the doctrine, and its connexion with the whole frame and body of revealed religion declared it. The like I ſay of the doctrine of the Trinity; not that it is neceſſary in the ſame degree with the doctrine of the reſurrection, but in proportion, while much depends upon it, though not ſo much as does upon

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 14. 17.

upon the other. Indeed neither of them are ſo neceſſary but that natural religion might ſubſiſt without them, upon a belief of the immortality of the ſoul[k]: but both are very highly neceſſary in a chriſtian light, and in a ſcripture view, as both in their ſeveral ways and degrees ſupport the fabric of Chriſtianity, and the body of revealed religion. If a right knowledge of God, if diſpoſitions ſuitable to the heavenly ſtate we expect, if the regulation and ſpecification of our worſhip, if the due and proper force of goſpel motives, if juſt ideas of the œconomy of man's redemption and ſalvation, and of the doctrine of grace; if theſe and other the like momentous concerns hang upon the true notion of the ever bleſſed Trinity, can we after that, want any particular text or texts, to declare to us the neceſſity of our believing it? Not but that particular texts may be found which are explicit enough upon that head, as I may

[k] Some very learned men have been of opinion that the ſame perſons who in that time denied the reſurrection, denied alſo any future ſtate; which they infer from ſome reaſonings which St. Paul made uſe of againſt them, (Vitringa. obſerv. ſacr. L. iv. C. ix. p. 924. Buddeus, Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 299.) But I much queſtion whether they argue juſtly on that head, or whether St. Paul reaſoned upon their hypotheſis, or upon ſome other principles. It ſeems to me, that all St. Paul's reaſonings in that chapter, may be accounted for upon this poſtulatum, that if there be no reſurrection, the ſeparate ſoul, being under the ſentence and dominion of death, cannot emerge and riſe up to life and happineſs, but muſt inevitably periſh under ſuch ſtate of puniſhment, having no deliverer. But I offer this only as a conjecture, appearing to me not improbable.

may ſhew hereafter: but in the mean while, I obſerve, that our cauſe does not need that additional ſtrength, does not depend upon it.

Beſides, I would remark by the way, that a diſtinction might be properly enough made between a neceſſity of believing a ſcripture doctrine, and a neceſſity of not denying, or not oppoſing it: for certainly, a man may be under a ſtricter obligation not to deny or oppoſe a ſcripture verity, than poſitively to believe it; and it is a greater ſin, publicly to deny and oppoſe a ſacred truth, than it is merely not to admit it. Yet the ſocinians, whom Epiſcopius was inclined to ſcreen, did not only forbear giving aſſent to the doctrine, but they diſſented, and publicly oppoſed it with all poſſible vigour, nay, and with more wiles and artifices, than became plain honeſt men. Now, I take it, that though an explicit knowledge or belief, of many inferior ſcripture truths is not ordinarily required, yet it may be required and ſtrictly too, not to deny or oppoſe even them, ſuppoſing them plain; becauſe, it is, in effect, denying the veracity of God, or the inſpiration of ſcripture. I know of no diſpenſation there is for denying and oppoſing any one plain ſcripture truth, contriving artificial eluſions for it, any more than there is for diſobeying a plain precept, in like manner eluding it; nor how a partial faith, in ſuch a caſe, is at all more juſtifiable than a partial obedience: for indeed diſbelief is diſobedience, as I obſerved above. But the obſervation is much

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ſtronger when we find that the truth denied and oppoſed is a very material truth, one that has much depending upon it, one that lies near the foundation. How Epiſcopius could own it to be a truth, and yet think it no crime, or none deſerving a public cenſure, to deny and oppoſe it, is unaccountable. We do not want to have it ſaid in ſcripture, that it was neceſſary in particular, explicitly to know and believe it: but certainly if it be a truth revealed by God, as he allows, and not of the ſlighteſt kind neither, it was neceſſary not to deny or oppoſe it, and the man would deſerve the public cenſure of the church, that ſhould preſume ſo to do. Therefore the learned Epiſcopius has in this inſtance, impoſed a falſe rule of judging upon us, and ſuch as he himſelf did not allow of in other caſes. For, how could he attempt to charge impiety, blaſphemy, and the worſt of hereſies (as he pretends) upon the calviniſts? was it by citing any ſcripture texts which declare the neceſſity of believing the diſtinguiſhing doctrines on this ſide? No, but he endeavoured to ſhew that the calvinian doctrine, remotely concluded in impiety, blaſphemy, hereſy; and that conſideration he ſuppoſed ſufficient to found his ſevere charge againſt the calviniſts upon; though in points more perplexed and obſcure, and leſs agreed in, among Chriſtians ancient and modern, than the doctrine of the Trinity. So natural is it for men of the greateſt pretended moderation to confine it chiefly to their own

own friends, or party, and to exclude their adverſaries from the benefit of it. Faults of this kind will often happen on both ſides, while men are men: and the foundation of all is, that men will not agree about neceſſaries, while they agree that there ought to be unity ſo far, and no farther. Many reconcilers have thought of various expedients, and different degrees of latitude: the worſt that could be invented is indifference to all religions; which is like giving up an inheritance, and conſenting to ſtarve, for the ſaving of trouble and conteſt about it. But I paſs on.

4. A further fault I obſerved in the learned Epiſcopius, was, that he extended the ſame fallacious rule to other doctrines of moment, beſide this of the Trinity, and, as it ſeems, in order to contrive a ſhelter for his favourite ſocinians. He denied the neceſſity of believing the divine preſcience, as to future contingents[l], though at the ſame time he admitted the truth of the doctrine, in conſideration of the ſcripture prophecies[m]. Indeed as to the queſtion taken

[l] Supereſt ut inquiramus, an ad ſalutem æternam conſequendam, ſcitu credituque neceſſarium ſit Deo præſcientiam talem competere, adeo ut qui Deo eam competere aut negat, aut affirmare non audet, ſalute æternâ propterea excidat? In genere, nos id ad ſalutem ſcitu credituque neceſſarium eſſe negamus. 1. Quia nullum neceſſitatis indicium, aut veſtigium ejus in ſcripturâ reperire eſt, ſive indicium illud dicatur eſſe clarus textus, ſive conſequentia per ſe evidens.—Qui contra affirmat, ei incumbit probatio.

Epiſcop. Inſtit. L. iv. C. 18. p. 302.

[m] Epiſcop. ibid. C. 17. p. 299, &c.

taken in the preciſe terms as he has ſtated it, "whether it be ſtrictly neceſſary to ſalvation to "know and believe it," and "whether a man ſhall "forfeit his ſalvation for not believing, or not "knowing it;" I ſay, in this preciſe view, it is hard to know how to anſwer, ſince it ſeems to proceed upon a wrong ſuppoſition of a certain quantity of faith, or of explicit knowledge, as neceſſary to the ſalvation of every perſon; about which we can determine nothing. But put the queſtion, whether the doctrine be not highly important, and richly worth contending for, or whether the impugners of it be not very much to blame, deſerving public cenſure here, and puniſhment hereafter, for ſuch pernicious doctrine, and then the anſwer is eaſy, and certain: it is a very important doctrine, and the denial of it, eſpecially if open and obſtinate, highly criminal. Epiſcopius himſelf allows, that it is neceſſary to ſalvation to believe and know that God foreſees whatever he has determined to bring to paſs; becauſe God himſelf ſtrongly inſiſts upon it, as a mark of diſtinction, whereby he will be proved to be the true God, in oppoſition to all rival deities[n]. But with ſubmiſſion, may there not be thouſands of illiterate

[n] Quænam iſta ſint quæ de divinâ ſcientiâ, omnibus ac ſingulis ſcitu credituque ſunt neceſſaria? Tenemur ſcire ac credere, Deum ſcire ea omnia quæ a divino aliquo decreto ſuo dependent.—Ratio eſt, quia hanc ſcientiæ perfectionem Deus ſibi tanto cum zelo adtribuit, et adtribui vult, ut per eam, et propter eam, ſe diſcernat, diſcernique velit ab omnibus dæmonibus,

rate Chriſtians, who have not the explicit knowledge of that matter, or may never conſider it? Why then is this more neceſſary to ſalvation (in that ſtrict ſenſe of the phraſe) than the other? In truth, neither of them are ſo, in that rigorous ſenſe: but both are highly important, and I conceive, equally ſo; becauſe one implies the other, and they ſtand or fall together. God muſt foreknow future contingents, if he forms decrees long before hand about them. If he decreed and foretold long before, that Judas ſhould be permitted voluntarily to betray Chriſt; he muſt have foreſeen likewiſe that Judas would voluntarily do it, and how he would do it. There is no accounting for numerous prophecies, without the ſuppoſition of God's foreknowing future contingents; and ſince God makes this the diſtinguiſhing character of the true God; it is in effect diſowning the truth of ſcripture, and denying the true God°, to deny the divine preſcience. How then can the

nibus, gentiumque diis atque idolis, tanquam verum unicumque Deum, qui ſolus idcirco ſummo honore, cultu, et obſequio dignus ſit, uti videre ex Iſa. xli. 23.

Epiſcop. Inſtitut. L. iv. C. 18. p. 303.

° Mr. Lobb, in few words, well repreſents the caſe as follows: "From this notion of theirs, revealed religion receives "a wound: for if God doth not know future contingents, "how can he foretel them? And if he cannot foretel them, of "what uſe is the prophetical parts of the holy ſcriptures? "And if they muſt be rejected as uſeleſs, will not the deiſts "be abundantly gratified? or if it be yielded that God doth "not foreknow future contingents, it will neceſſarily follow, "that his knowledge is not infinite, and he cannot be God." Growth of Error, p. 188.

the ſocinians be excuſed in that particular, eſpecially conſidering how preſumptuous they are in it, going upon this proud principle, that they are able to ſearch the Almighty to perfection, or that nothing is to be believed but what they can comprehend. Let but the modus of the divine knowledge be admitted as inſcrutable to weak mortals, and then all difficulties are over with us at once: the infinite perfections of the divine mind ought in this caſe, to ſilence all objections. But if men will think too meanly of God, and too highly of themſelves, and from thence proceed to teach ſuch doctrines as undermine the ſcripture prophecies, and the divine perfections, and ſap the foundations both of natural and revealed religion; can there be any juſt excuſe made for ſuch a wanton abuſe of liberty, and ſuch unwarrantable conduct in affairs of the laſt conſequence to the ſalvation of mankind? But enough hath been ſaid to ſhew, that Epiſcopius's famed rule for judging of neceſſaries, is fallacious and wrong, and ſuch as he himſelf did not proceed by in condemning the calviniſts; though he was diſpoſed to make uſe of it for favouring the ſocinians. The importance of any doctrine is not to be judged of merely from the declarations of ſcripture concerning its neceſſity, but from the nature and quality of the doctrine itſelf, and the relation it bears to the other parts of religion, and from the miſchiefs likely to follow upon oppoſing it.

II. From

II. From Epiſcopius the chief leader, I paſs on to his kinſman and follower, the learned Limborch; of whoſe principles in this cauſe I ſhall treat the more briefly, becauſe they are the ſame in the main, with what have been mentioned under the preceding article. His acknowledgement of the truth of the common doctrine of the Trinity may be inferred from his admitting the common confeſſion of the remonſtrants, and from what he has aſſerted in his own works[p]: wherein he ſufficiently expreſſes the main doctrine (if we are to judge him an honeſt man) and proves it too, though not to advantage. It is true, he afterwards drops a ſuſpicious expreſſion[q], which requires a candid interpretation, to make it bear; and he meanly talks of Petavius's ingenuouſly confeſſing[r] that ſome of the ante-nicene fathers diſowned the co-eternity and co-equality of the Son. He did not

[p] Reſtat jam ut explicemus, quiſnam ille ſit Deus cui divinam hanc naturam competere ſacræ literæ docent: Pater nimirum et Filius et Spiritus Sanctus. Limborch. Theol. Chriſt. L. ii. C. 17. p. 97. Tribus hiſce tribuuntur divinæ perfectiones: unde concludimus Deitatem tribus hiſce eſſe communem. (ibid. p. 98.) Ea de Jeſu Chriſto Filio Dei, enunciantur, ex quibus liquet ipſum per veram, attamen arcanam et ineffabilem generationem, Filium Dei extitiſſe—ante omnia ſæcula, et per eam naturæ divinæ conſortem fuiſſe. p. 99. Ex hiſce colligimus, eſſentiam divinam et Filio et Spiritui Sancto eſſe communem, p. 102.

[q] Sed et eſt quædam ſupereminentia Patris reſpectu Filii, et Patris ac Filii reſpectu Spiritus Sancti, ratione dignitatis et poteſtatis: dignius ſiquidem eſt generare quam generari, ſpirare quam ſpirari, p. 102.

[r] Sufficiat hic nobis ingenua Dionyſii Petavii, doctores inter jeſuitas celeberrimi ac doctiſſimi, confeſſio, &c. p. 102.

not underſtand the ſubtlety of the Jeſuit, nor conſider that probably it was not ſo much ingenuous confeſſion of that great man, as a diſingenuous miſrepreſentation of his to ſerve the intereſt of the modern church of Rome[s]. His pretences have been abundantly confuted by Biſhop Bull, and ſeveral other learned hands.

However, as I ſaid, Limborch has ſufficiently expreſſed the main doctrine, and aſſerted its truth: we are next to obſerve, what he thought of the neceſſity of believing it, or of the importance of it. He begins with declaring his ſcruples againſt aſſerting the neceſſity of believing the eternal filiation and divinity of God the Son[t], while he admits the truth. He conceives it not ſo neceſſary, as the owning Jeſus to be the Meſſiah. Suppoſing it be not, yet it may be neceſſary notwithſtanding. But if it can be proved that the Meſſiah predicted in the Old Teſtament, is there deſcribed under ſuch characters as can belong only to God (as certainly it may) then it will be as neceſſary to believe him to be God, as to believe him to be the Meſſiah, becauſe he cannot be the Meſſiah, unleſs

[s] See my Second defence, preface p. 18. Bull, Procem. Sect. 8. p. 6. Grab. Præfat. ad Bulli opp. Nelſon's Life of Bull, p. 287.

[t] Credimus nos, alibi doceri perſonam hanc eſſe filium Dei reſpectu naturæ divinæ ac filiationis æternæ. —— Quamdiu nobis ea ſcripturæ loca non occurrunt quibus naturæ divinæ cum humanâ unio perinde fidei ſalutaris objectum neceſſarium ſtatuitur atque officium Chriſti de Jeſu credendum eſt, nos, licet veritatem illam amplectamur, eam tamen ut creditu ad ſalutem neceſſariam definire non audemus. Limborch, L. v. C. 9. p. 413.

leſs he be alſo God[a]. However, as I before ſaid, admitting that one of theſe doctrines is more neceſſary or more important than the other, (though they are in juſt conſequence inſeparable) yet both may be fundamentals, notwithſtanding. He goes on to ſpeak of the obſcurity of the doctrine, which is abuſing it; becauſe though the thing is myſterious, and the manner obſcure, yet the main doctrine is as clear as can be deſired, as clear as any doctrines concerning the divine nature, or attributes; clear in the general, clear ſo far as we are bound to believe. See above. He was aware of this anſwer; and therefore he endeavours next to evade the force of it. He owns the plea, with reſpect to ſome other fundamental doctrines, that the main ſubſtance of them may be clear, while the circumſtantials only are obſcure: and he inſtances in that of the reſurrection of the dead, which he ſays is clear, and neceſſary to be believed; but whether the bodies will be numerically the ſame, he thinks is not clear, nor a neceſſary article of faith. This is a point which I need not here debate; we may admit the inſtance for argument ſake, and now let us apply it, and ſee how far the ſame reaſoning will bear. We receive the doctrine of the reſurrection, conſidered in a general undeterminate view, we define not the preciſe manner; and we admit the eternal divinity of God the Son, and the union of

[a] Vid. Bull Judic. Eccl. Cathol. C. vii. ſect. 5. and ſecond Letter to Mr. Nation, by P. C. p. 9.

of all three in one godhead, not defining the manner of the union or diſtinction. So far the caſes appear parallel: only indeed, the reſurrection is a matter that falls under imagination, the other belongs only to pure intellect. But now comes on the ſtreſs of the queſtion: he aſſerts, that the obſcurity lies not in the circumſtantials of the doctrine of the Trinity, but in the very ſubſtance of it. That we deny; and Epiſcopius himſelf denied it, (unleſs he greatly prevaricated) as obſerved above. And how will the aſſertion be proved? The profeſſor attempts it, by throwing our main doctrine into ſcholaſtic terms[b], that ſo it may inſtantly carry the face of obſcurity in the very words. This is not dealing fairly with us: he does not chuſe to expreſs it ſo himſelf in other places, where he admits the verity of the doctrine, and where he declares his own faith; neither did Epiſcopius, or the common confeſſion of the remonſtrants ſo expreſs it. Why then muſt they chuſe one way of expreſſion, for declaring the truth of the doctrine, and another for rejecting the neceſſity of it, except it be to ſerve a turn? The learned profeſſor, inſtead of ſaying one Jehovah, or one God, or one godhead, here chuſes the phraſe

[b] Alia vero eſt ratio eorum dogmatum quæ non in circumſtantiis quibuſdam, ſed in ſeipſis ſuâque ſubſtantiâ, obſcuritatem involvunt: quale eſt dogma de SS. Trinitate, quod tres diſtinctæ perſonæ, una generans, altera genita, tertia ſpirata ſint unica numero eſſentia.—Quod ſtatim primo ſuo conceptu varias involvit difficultates quæ a dogmate ipſo ſeparari nullatenus poſſint. Limborch, L. v. C. 9. p. 414.

phraſe of one numerical eſſence; which is a late ſcholaſtic phraſe, and faulty more ways than one. Firſt, becauſe the terms themſelves are technical terms, and no way neceſſary to the chriſtian faith: and next, becauſe they carry an equivocation in them; and the propoſition can neither be admitted, nor rejected, till it be carefully diſtinguiſhed. Numerical eſſence in a ſabellian ſenſe, is hereſy: in another ſenſe, it is a truth darkly expreſſed. That the perſons are one God, one Jehovah, is of the ſubſtance of the doctrine; but that they ſhould be denominated one numerical eſſence, is not. For, firſt, it is a queſtion, whether the divine unity ought to be brought under our diſtinctions about numerical and ſpecific, contrived for expreſſing things finite: and if it ſhould, it is ſtill another queſtion, in what preciſe ſenſe of the word numerical (which is an equivocal term) the propoſition can be allowed. Both theſe queſtions are circumſtantials, furniſhing matter for ſtrife about words and names, not at all affecting the main thing[c]: and the obſcurity here complained of lies not in the doctrine itſelf, but in the unfair manner of expreſſing it, to give ſome colour for the complaint. If any perſon, inſtead of ſuch a plain expreſſion, as God's preſence every where, ſhould call it, the infinite expanſion or diffuſion of the divine eſſence, it would be unfair and wrong, in two views; firſt, as the

[c] See my ſecond Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 448, &c. alias, p. 453, &c. Farther vindication, p. 80. Brown's Animad. p. 21, 22.

the terms are ſcholaſtic, when plainer words would better ſerve the purpoſes of truth; and next, as it is running the reader into an obſcure ſpeculation about expanſion what it means, and in what ſenſe it may be admitted. Any doctrines whatever may thus be involved in obſcurities, by clothing them in dark and equivocal terms, or by ſo contriving them as to bring in ſomething of the modus into the main doctrine, when it ought to be intirely left out, either as unknown or as not material[d]. I am ſenſible that the phraſe of numerical eſſence has long obtained in the ſchools, and is capable of a good ſenſe: but yet eſſence of eſſence (ever ſince that term came in) was always catholic doctrine, as God of God. And numerical eſſence, a more modern phraſe, muſt be ſo explained as to agree with the other, and to exclude a ſabellian ſenſe. Otherwiſe it is no doctrine of ours, but an ancient hereſy. But enough has been ſaid to ſhew, that the learned Limborch has uſed a little too much art, in repreſenting our doctrine as obſcure, only by the clouds raiſed from an obſcure expreſſion. The doctrine itſelf is otherwiſe clear enough, as

[d] Sæpe res ipſa fundamentalis eſſe poteſt, modus vero rei, et circumſtantiæ minime fundamentales. Etenim cum res ipſa tantum in genere revelata eſt, et tanquam neceſſaria a Deo impoſita, tunc certe res ipſa tantum pro fundamento habenda eſt, non vero modus et circumſtantiæ quæ pari evidentiâ, aut cum ſimili neceſſitatis charactere revelata non ſunt. Et re verâ, pauciſſimæ ſunt res, præſertim in divinis, quarum modum et circumſtantias perfectè noſcamus. Alphonſ. Turret. de fundament. p. 20.

as I have before manifeſted at large: and every plain chriſtian will underſtand as clearly what he means when he ſays, the three divine perſons are one God, as when he ſays, there will be a reſurrection of the dead[e]. Both the expreſſions are large and indefinite, wrapped up in generals; not deſcending to the minute circumſtances belonging to this and that, but abſtracting from them, and leaving them undetermined.

I meet with nothing more in Limborch deſerving any particular anſwer. He has indeed ſome additional conſiderations in the ſame place, but ſuch as amount only to mere aſſertions without proofs, viz. That it is ſufficient to believe in Jeſus as the Meſſiah, and that our faith reſpects the office, not the perſon, that it is enough to conſider him as mediator, and the like: all precarious aſſertions, taking for granted the matter in queſtion; not to mention that the ancient and true notion of Chriſt as mediator, implies his divinity, and ſuppoſes him to be both truly God and truly man[f]. Strange that a perſon of his great abilities could perſuade himſelf, that the believing in Chriſt as to his ſeveral offices of prophet, prieſt and king, ſhould be neceſſary[g], and yet that believing in him as a divine prophet, a divine prieſt, and a divine king

[e] L. v. C. 9. p. 414.

[f] See my ſecond Defence, Q. xvi. p. 375. alias 380.

[g] Cum itaque objectum Fidei Chriſtianæ propriè reſpiciat munera Chriſti, eorum fides ac profeſſio etiam neceſſaria eſt. Limb. L. v. C. 9. p. 415.

king (though the fact be true that he is ſo) ſhould be of little or no ſignificancy. One might as eaſily believe, that the ſoul is of no conſideration to the body, as that our Lord's divinity, which runs through all his offices, and muſt enliven and invigorate every part, ſhould be of no conſideration, or ſlight, to a chriſtian's faith in theſe offices. But this great man, as well as his greater predeceſſor, had his prejudices; and both of them had imbibed a very falſe notion of the ancient churches, as if they had not conſtantly inſiſted upon the neceſſity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, or had not condemned the contrary opinions as heretical. That was Epiſcopius's firm perſuaſion, and he inſiſted much upon it[h], having taken up the opinion too haſtily from miſrepreſentations made of the fathers, by ſome moderns, not being himſelf acquainted, to any degree of perfection, with that kind of learning[i]. And the like may be juſtly ſuſpected of Limborch alſo, who truſted to Petavius in that matter, as I have already intimated. Had their ſurmiſe in that particular been juſt, I could not ſo much have blamed them for the reſt. For to make any thing neceſſary at this time of day, which anciently was not ſo, or to conceive that the moſt pure and primitive churches failed in neceſſaries, is too bold and ſhocking a thought for

[h] Epiſcop. Inſt. L. iv. C. 34. p. 339, 340. Reſponſ. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 295.

[i] Vid. Bull, Præmonit. ad Lector. de neceſſitat. credend.

for any candid conſiderate man to entertain. But both Epiſcopius and his diſciple were much deceived in that affair, as hath been abundantly ſhewn by Biſhop Bull; and as I ſhall endeavour alſo to make plain to the Engliſh reader before I have done. And then it will the more eaſily be admitted, that the neceſſity of the doctrine is ſufficiently inculcated in ſcripture, when it appears that the ancient churches collected ſuch neceſſity from the ſame ſcripture.

I have not yet mentioned any particular texts declaring ſuch neceſſity, nor do I think it needful, becauſe the truth of ſuch a doctrine infers its neceſſity to as many as the doctrine is revealed to. But yet I may obſerve, that the inſtitution of baptiſm in the name of Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, carries with it a very ſenſible and affecting argument of the importance of the doctrine. It is indeed, when conſidered in all its views, a ſtrong proof of the truth of the doctrine, as might be ſhewn at large, and often has been[k]: but ſuppoſing the truth proved ſufficiently from other texts, then there cannot be a more convincing argument of the importance of it than this; that our bleſſed Lord himſelf has recommended

[k] See my Sermons at St. Paul's, Serm. viii. p. 288, &c.
Biſhop Stillingfleet's Vindication of the Trinity, p. 177, &c. 299, &c. Frid. Spanheim. F. Tom. iii. p. 1210.
Vitringa Obſervat. Sacr. Tom. ii. C. 22. p. 813—826.
Dr. Trapp's Lecture Serm. p. 100—104.
Mr. Abraham Taylor's true Scrip. Doct. p. 91, &c.
To which may be added, Baſil de Spiritu Sancto, C. 9. 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 27.

commended it as the prime and leading doctrine, without the explicit mention whereof a man cannot be made a chriſtian; that he has conveyed it to us in that ſolemn form, that moſt diſtinguiſhed manner to every diſciple of Chriſt, as the firſt thing proper for him to be acquainted with, deſerving and requiring his moſt early thoughts and care; and alſo his conſtant and tendereſt devotion ever after. On this foundation was the church itſelf erected, and ſtands to this day. What ſtronger, or more effectual method could have been deviſed to proclaim the neceſſity and high importance of this great article? A conſideration which may receive yet further light and ſtrength, by looking into antiquity, and there obſerving what a ſtreſs was laid upon the interrogatories in baptiſm, and how this article made up the principal part, if not the whole of the firſt creeds, and what particular care was taken to inſtruct the candidates in this important doctrine previouſly to baptiſm. But what relates to antiquity, will more properly come in under a diſtinct chapter deſigned for that purpoſe. I forbear likewiſe to inſiſt upon another ſcripture argument of great force, which St. John's writings afford me; becauſe that alſo may more conveniently be reſerved for another place in theſe papers.

I have now run through the three ſeveral heads of debate, which I undertook; ſhewing in ſo many diſtinct chapters, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is both clear and practical,

tical, and ſufficiently inculcated in ſcripture to be eſteemed an article of high importance, an eſſential of Chriſtianity, a fundamental doctrine of the goſpel, diffuſing itſelf through the whole of our religion, and being, as it were, the very life and ſpirit of it. It remains now to be enquired, how we ought to behave towards thoſe who openly reject, or impugn it, or to take part with them that do.

CHAP. IV.

Shewing, that communion ought not to be held with men, that openly reject the fundamental doctrines of Chriſtianity, and perſiſt in ſo doing.

THIS may be argued two ways, Firſt, from expreſs ſcripture texts; and next, from the very nature and reaſon of the thing conſidered upon ſcripture principles.

1. I begin with ſcripture texts. St. Paul's inſtruction to the Romans, in ſuch caſes is: *Mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them: for they that are ſuch, ſerve not our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but their own belly, and by good words and fair ſpeeches deceive the hearts of the ſimple*[1]. The offenders

[1] Rom. xvi. 17, 18.

offenders here pointed at, were moſt probably[m] the judaizing falſe teachers, thoſe that preached up circumciſion, and the obſervance of the law as neceſſary to ſalvation; a doctrine ſubverſive of the grace of the goſpel, as obſerved above. The apoſtle therefore exhorts his chriſtian converts to mark them, that is, to beware of them, in order to avoid them, and to preſerve themſelves from the infection of their pernicious doctrine. And as he wrote by the Spirit of God, and had the gift of diſcerning the ſpirits of men, he could tell his converts with a certain and well grounded aſſurance the inſides of the men; that they were men of carnal minds, and profligate conſciences, uſing fair and plauſible ſpeeches to beguile others, for their own humour, or pleaſure, or intereſt, or vanity. Such indeed is the general character of hereſiarchs of all kinds: but yet without very clear and ſufficient grounds appearing in overt acts, men ought not to take upon them the liberty of an apoſtle, in pronouncing upon the inward motives which heretics are led by: it is ſufficient to paſs ſentence upon the quality of the doctrine, and to condemn it as ſubverſive of the goſpel (if it really be ſo) and to renounce communion with its open favourers and abettors. So much at leaſt is manifeſtly implied in the advice given to avoid them, or turn from them. Receive them

[m] See Grotius and Whitby, and Wolfius upon the place: and Vitringa Obſervat. Sacr. Lib. iv. C. 9. Buddei Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 121.

them not as miniſters of Chriſt, nor own them as brethren: for they ſerve not the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; but their fair ſpeeches and falſe colourings are fitted to deceive unwary ſouls. Therefore avoid them, ſhun them, diſcountenance them, and that openly: for ſo they which are approved, will be made manifeſt[n], and not otherwiſe.

The ſame apoſtle pointing to the ſame heretics elſewhere, ſays, *There be ſome that trouble you, and would pervert* [ſubvert] *the goſpel of Chriſt: but though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other goſpel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, If any man preach any other goſpel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accurſed*[o]. How ſtrongly here does the apoſtle guard againſt admitting new doctrines, (ſubverſive of the old) through a common weakneſs incident to mankind, having men's perſons in admiration, on account of their parts or learning, or their appearing goodneſs, ſanctity, ſobriety. Though *we or an angel from heaven* ſhould preſume to do any ſuch wicked thing, *let him be accurſed*; words very expreſſive and poignant, in order to correct the weakneſs before mentioned; and another alſo near akin to it, the natural fondneſs many have for novelties. And I may further obſerve, that in ſuch caſes we have no concern at all with the virtues

[n] 1 Cor. xi. 19. [o] Gal. i. 8, 9.

virtues or good qualities of falſe teachers, be they ever ſo real or great: if they corrupt the faith in any groſs inſtance, that is reaſon ſufficient for refuſing communion with them, though they were otherwiſe bright as angels. A conſideration worth the noting, for the obviating ſome popular pretences on this head. I need not here enter into the diſpute, whether the words Ἀνάθεμα ἔϛω, amount to a ſolemn curſe, or are only a form of excommunication[p]. If we take it in the firſt and moſt rigorous ſenſe, it ſeems proper only to an apoſtle, or prophet, thus ſolemnly to curſe or bleſs in the name of the Lord. But as the chriſtian church afterwards[q] often uſed the ſame form in their excommunications, the milder ſenſe appears moſt probable. However that be, this ſolemn ſentence of the apoſtle amounts at leaſt to a ſtrict injunction or warning to all chriſtians, that they ſhould not communicate with perſons who corrupt the faith, (either by adding to it, or taking from it) in any groſs manner, ſuch as might be juſtly interpreted a ſubverſion of the goſpel of Chriſt. Such attempts are to be held in the utmoſt abhorrence, and the authors of them ſhunned as ſeducers and falſe apoſtles. It cannot well be ſuppoſed, that leſs than this is implied in the words of the apoſtle.

He

[p] See Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſt. p. 808, 809. Baſnag. Annal. Tom. ii. p. 477.

[q] See Suicer. Theſaurus in voc. ἀνάθεμα.

Bingham's Antiq. of the Chriſtian Church, Lib. xvi. C. 2, 8, 16, 17.

He goes on to ſay, ſpeaking of the ſame perſons in the ſame epiſtle, *He that troubleth you ſhall bear his judgment, whoſoever he be*[r]. *I would they were even cut off that trouble you*[s]. Which laſt words, I underſtand, with many judicious interpreters, of excommunication; and it is confirmed by what is ſaid in the ſame place, *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump*[t]; intimating the reaſon why the apoſtle wiſhed to have thoſe falſe teachers cut off from the communion of chriſtians, viz. to prevent the contagion ſpreading farther. I am aware, that ſome very learned men[u] diſlike the interpretation I have mentioned, but upon a very ſlender reaſon, as to me appears. They think the apoſtle would not have wiſhed for it only, but would have commanded it in virtue of his apoſtolical authority. It is true, he might have done it: but who knows for how many, or for what prudential reaſons, he might forbear for a time, and be content at that juncture, only to throw out a wiſh, in order to prepare the Galatians for it, and to incline them by ſlow and gentle methods, to concur the more readily with it, when it ſhould be abſolutely neceſſary? It is not to be preſumed, that excommunication, or a formal renouncing of communion, is a thing to be precipitated at all adventures, or that there may

[r] Gal. v. 10. [s] Gal. v. 12.

[t] Gal. v. 9. compare 1 Cor. v. 6, 7.

[u] Elſner in loc. p. 196. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 808. Wolfius Curæ philolog. et Crit. Vol. ii. p. 772.

may not often be good reaſons for delay, that ſo an affair of the higheſt conſequence may be conducted with the utmoſt prudence. No doubt but that beſides the miſchievous nature of the hereſy itſelf, ſeveral other circumſtances of time, place and perſons, ough to have their weight in conſultations relating to church diſcipline upon offenders. But I paſs on.

St. Paul gives advice to Timothy, in the words here following, *Theſe things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to wholſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs, he is proud,* &c. — *from ſuch withdraw thyſelf*[w]. Perhaps the rendering and the ſenſe would run better thus: [x] *If any man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to the wholſome words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the doctrine which is according to godlineſs,* if he is puffed up, knowing nothing, but doating *about queſtions,* &c. *from ſuch withdraw thyſelf.* It is a diſputable point, what particular ſect, or ſet of falſe teachers, the apoſtle here refers to, whether judaizers or gnoſtics, or others diſtinct from both. But the one thing is plain, which is ſufficient to our preſent purpoſe, that the apoſtle exhorts Timothy to withdraw from them, and that in order either to diſcountenance their falſe doctrines, or to preſerve himſelf and others from receiving contagion by them. To the

[w] 1 Tim. vi. 2—5.
[x] Vid. Vitringa Obſervat. Sacr. Tom. i. p. 220.

the ſame purpoſe is what the apoſtle again ſays to Timothy:

Shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increaſe unto more ungodlineſs; and their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus, who concerning the truth have erred, ſaying, that the reſurrection is paſt already, and overthrow the faith of ſome[y]. The heads and patrons of the hereſy here mentioned, the apoſtle had excommunicated before, delivering them over unto Satan, to ſtop their blaſpheming[z]. They appear to have been perſons who believed the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament, but miſinterpreted them, allegoriſing away the doctrine of the reſurrection, reſolving it all into figure and metaphor[a]. The delivering over unto Satan, ſeems to have been a form of excommunication, declaring the perſon reduced to the ſtate of an heathen: and in the apoſtolical age, it was accompanied with ſupernatural or miraculous effects upon the bodies of the perſons ſo delivered[b]: though it may be ſuppoſed that ſuch effects might laſt beyond the apoſtolic age, becauſe other miraculous gifts certainly did ſo[c]. I am well aware of the diſputes which have been among perſons of the beſt learning[d], about the

[y] 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18. [z] 1 Tim. i. 20.

[a] Vid. Vitringa Obſerv. ſacr. Lib. iv. C. 9. p. 925. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 300.

[b] 1 Cor. v. 5. ſee commentators. [c] See Addenda, p. 496.

[d] A ſummary account of them may be ſeen in Wolfius's Curæ Philolog. et Crit. ad 1 Cor. v. 5. p. 367. or in Bingham's Eccleſ. Antiq. B. xvi C. ii. ſect. 15.

the preciſe meaning of the phraſe, whether it ſignified excommunication, or an appendage to it. I have choſen that interpretation which appears moſt probable[e]. I muſt own, there is a notion which appears to run through the debates of ſeveral learned men on this head, and which I cannot well underſtand. They ſeem to take it for granted, that excommunication is a puniſhment of the ſoul. I eaſily conceive it to be a ſpiritual puniſhment, as not being a corporal one, and as inflicted by a ſpiritual, that is, eccleſiaſtical authority: but how it is properly a puniſhment of the ſoul, I apprehend not. It's deſign is ſalutary, and the effect alſo often ſalutary; ſo that it is rather medicinal than penal, with reſpect to the ſoul. But this by the way only: it would be too large a digreſſion here, to conſider that point in ſuch a manner as it deſerves to be conſidered.

I go on to other texts, and ſhall take one by the way, which though not preciſely to the point I am upon, yet is not altogether foreign. *There are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, eſpecially they of the circumciſion; whoſe mouths muſt be ſtopped, who ſubvert whole houſes, teaching things which they ought not for filthy lucre's ſake.—Rebuke them ſharply, that they may be ſound in the faith*[f]. We may here obſerve the ardent zeal

[e] See Biſhop Potter's Church Government, p. 371, &c. Dr. Rogers's Review of a Diſcourſe of the Viſible, &c. p. 392.

[f] Tit. i. 10, 11, 13.

zeal of the apoſtle againſt falſe teachers, who corrupted the faith, and how great a ſtreſs he lays upon being ſound in principles. But he does not give orders for excommunicating thoſe deceivers directly, but to admoniſh them firſt, and that with ſome ſharpneſs, in order to ſhame them, and ſilence them, and bring them back to the true faith. From all which one may collect theſe following conſiderations, which may be of ſome uſe to us: 1. That religion is not a perſonal thing, which every man may new model, or alter for himſelf, without rebuke from his fellow chriſtians, or from the governors of the church. It is the joint patrimony of the whole community, and every man more or leſs is accountable to his neighbour for any waſte made in it. It is the common concern, and every one in his ſtation and degree, muſt give a helping hand to preſerve it in its native purity. 2. That the teaching and propagating of falſe doctrines, may ſubvert whole houſes, and do a great deal of miſchief: ſo that truth is not always a gainer by unreſtrained liberties of that kind. 3. That ſharp rebukes are very proper in ſuch caſes, and are no breaches of charity, but the trueſt inſtances of brotherly affection and love. 4. That admonitions and increpations ſhould firſt be tried, even in caſe of great corruption in doctrine, rather than come to extremities at once: a rule expreſsly taught us, in what I am next going to cite.

A man that is an heretic, after the firſt and ſecond admonition, reject; knowing that he that is ſuch, is ſubverted, and ſinneth, being condemned of himſelf[a]. This text will deſerve a more particular examination, containing much in it directly belonging to the point in hand. Wherefore I ſhall handle the ſeveral parts of it the more diſtinctly. 1. *A man that is an heretic.* Here the firſt queſtion is, who, or what is an heretic? To which I anſwer in the general, not every one that miſtakes in judgment, though in matters of great importance, in points fundamental, but he that openly eſpouſes ſuch fundamental error. That I take to be the true and full notion of an heretic, according to the ſcripture idea of it. Dr. Whitby adds to the definition, the eſpouſing it out of diſguſt, pride, envy, or ſome worldly principle[b], and againſt his conſcience[c]. Indeed that may generally be the caſe, but that thoſe ſeveral particulars are neceſſary to the definition of heretic, is not to be allowed him by any means, for the reaſons here following.

1. By that rule there would be no certain knowing, in moſt caſes, who is an heretic, or who not, ſince there is no looking into the heart: and how then could we at all obſerve the ſcripture rule of avoiding or rejecting heretics?

2. There

[a] Tit. iii. 10, 11.
[b] Whitby on Gal. v. 19.
[c] Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

2. There is as much danger, or more, when a blind enthuſiaſt, or any perſon of invincible ignorance or prejudice, eſpouſes falſe doctrines, and corrupts the faith, as when evil-minded men do the ſame thing of envy, pride, &c. and againſt their own conſciences: and what ſhall be done in ſuch caſes? The way certainly is, to cenſure the doctrine as hereſy, and to do all that prudence and charity preſcribe for the preventing ſuch well-meaning, but mad teachers, from ſeducing the flock of Chriſt. It is not poſſible for men accurately to diſtinguiſh one caſe from the other; and therefore one general rule muſt ſerve for both: God will diſtinguiſh at the laſt day. In the mean time, all proper care muſt be taken to guard againſt the threatning miſchief. For the poiſon of the doctrine, by whomſoever ſpread, or upon whatſoever principle, is juſt the ſame; only, if it comes from a man otherwiſe honeſt, pious, ſober, &c. it is likely to inſinuate itſelf deeper, and ſpread the wider. I ſay then, hereſy lies in eſpouſing pernicious doctrines: that we can judge of, and by that rule, can underſtand how to proceed. The other way involves all in darkneſs, and leaves a matter of the greateſt conſequence to the utmoſt uncertainty. But let us examine what the learned author before-mentioned had to plead in behalf of his notion. The ſtrength of all lies chiefly in the word αὐτοκατάκριτος, *ſelf condemned*, here uſed by the apoſtle; as if no man could be an heretic

that is not ſelf condemned, or does not go againſt his own judgment and conſcience. But I obſerve, that the apoſtle directs Titus to admoniſh a heretic once and again. It is ſuppoſed, that Titus might know a heretic, viz. by his eſpouſing ſome doctrine ſubverſive of the goſpel: for how could it be certainly known, whether the man believed himſelf, or taught contrary to his own judgment? If after being twice admoniſhed for teaching ſuch pernicious doctrine, he ſhould ſtill perſiſt, then he was to be looked upon as αὐτοκατάκριτος, ſelf condemned. It could no longer be pure ignorance or thoughtleſneſs, after two ſeveral warnings, but muſt now be looked upon as matter of his own choice or election[d], as mere wilfulneſs and obſtinacy to perſiſt in oppoſition to the truth. When I ſay againſt the truth, I ſuppoſe that to have been a clear caſe to the admoniſher before the firſt admonition, otherwiſe there had not been room for admonition at all. Admoniſh *a man that is an heretic*; not a man that is really no heretic, which would be contumelious and injurious. And if he perſiſts after two admonitions, then look upon him as αὐτοκατάκριτος, ſelf condemned, and reject him. It is plain enough from the whole tenor of this paſſage, that αὐτοκατάκριτος, whatever it means, does not belong to the definition of an heretic as ſuch, but to that of an admoniſhed and ſtill obſtinate

[d] Ideo et ſibi damnatum dixit hæreticum, quia et in quo damnatur ſibi elegit. Tertul. de Præſcript. Hæret. Cap. 6.

obſtinate heretic. He is ſuppoſed a heretic before, and therefore was to be admoniſhed once, and, if need ſhould be, again: and then, if he perſiſted, he was to be looked upon as deſperate and incorrigible; and therefore to be rejected utterly[e]. There is indeed ſomething elliptical in the ſentence: *Knowing that he that is ſuch*; as much as to ſay, knowing that he who continues ſuch after two admonitions, is now *without excuſe*[f], and as it were, paſſes ſentence upon himſelf, either as voluntarily cutting himſelf off from the church, by an open revolt[g], or as rendering himſelf uncapable of the privileges and bleſſings that belong to it, by renouncing its faith; which, in a juſt conſtruction, is judging, or declaring himſelf unworthy[h] of the bleſſings

[e] Quare autem poſt primam et ſecundam correptionem *devitandus* ſit, reddit cauſas, dicens: quod *ſubverſus eſt ejuſmodi, et peccat quum ſit a ſemetipſo damnatus.* Qui enim ſemel biſque correptus, audito errore ſuo, non vult corrigi, errare exiſtimat corrigentem: et e contrario ſe ad pugnas et jurgia verborum parans, eum vult lucrifacere a quo docetur. Hieron. in loc. Vol. iv. p. 439.

[f] Ἀναπολόγητος. See Suicer. Theſaur. in αὐτοκατάκριτος.

[g] Hic enim *reus ſibi* erit, qui non ad Epiſcopo ejectus, ſed ſponte de eccleſiâ profugus, et hæreticâ præſumptione a *ſemetipſo* damnatus. Cyp. Epiſ. LXIX. p. 182. edit. Ox.

Propterea verò *a ſemetipſo* dicitur eſſe *damnatus*; quia fornicator, adulter, homicida, et cætera vitia per ſacerdotes de eccleſia propelluntur: hæretici autem in ſemetipſos ſententiam ferunt, ſuo arbitrio de eccleſiâ recedentes: quæ receſſio, propriæ conſcientiæ videtur eſſe damnatio. Hieronym. in loc. p. 439. Compare Hammond upon the text.

[h] See Acts xiii. 46. ſo Irenæus — eſt *a ſemetipſo damnatus*, reſiſtens et repugnans ſaluti ſuæ, quod faciunt omnes hæretici. Iren. adver. Hær. L. iii. C. 1. p. 174. Maſſvet.

bleſſings tendered. I have been the longer in explaining this text; becauſe the real meaning and purport of it has been frequently miſunderſtood, or miſrepreſented. Now I return to Dr. Whitby.

He pleads, "That the apoſtle ſaith not to "Titus, do thou convince or inform him of his "error, but do thou admoniſh him of his fault: "which ſhews, that the crime lay not in his "head or his miſtaken judgment (for that can "never be corrected by admonition, but only "by inſtruction) but that it lay in the irre-"gularity of his affections, and the perverſeneſs "of his will[i]." But what if the fault lay in heart and head both, as indeed all faults do? *Omnis peccans ignorat*, is a true maxim. There is ſome error always in judgment, before there is an error in practice; for evil, as evil, cannot be choſen. The fault therefore of an heretic, really ſuch, is, that ſome corrupt affection (I except the caſe of invincible infirmity) miſleads him firſt to paſs a raſh precipitate judgment; and next to eſpouſe that judgment openly. And laſtly, (if he proceeds ſo far) to perſiſt in it againſt all advices or admonitions to the contrary. The heart perverts the head; and both conſpire in the ſame falſe judgment and conduct. The good Doctor pleads farther: "No "man who acts according to his judgment, "how erroneous ſoever it may be, is ſelf con-"demned in that action[k]." Yes, if he made a a raſh

[i] Whitby on Tit. iii. 10. Comp. Dr. Stebbing, p. 184. fol.
[k] Whitby, ibid.

a raſh judgment, and might have known or done better, he is ſelf condemned: for he condemns others who judge raſhly and wrongly, when they might and ought to have judged better; and ſo of courſe he condemns himſelf, by the ſame ſentence[l]. There are two kinds of ſelf condemnation, one direct and explicit, the other indirect, implicit, virtual, conſequential. As to direct ſelf condemnation, few fall into it: for men are ſo partial towards their own failings, that they ſeldom ſee their own falſe judgment, or wrong conduct, and as ſeldom condemn themſelves for either. It is their fault that they do not: ſuch ſelf condemnation would be commendable, and a good ſtep towards recovery. It is not ſuch ſelf condemnation that the apoſtle ſpeaks of: there is too little of it every where; preſumption and ſelf applauſe are the foibles of mankind. And they will eaſily take care in moſt caſes, not to be directly ſelf condemned, though condemned by all the world beſides. It is not ſelf condemnation in this ſenſe, that makes an ill man, or aggravates a fault, but the want of it[m]. The other kind of ſelf condemnation, which I call indirect, is what the apoſtle may point to as an aggravating circumſtance of hereſy, his perſiſting in it after two admonitions. The man juſtifies himſelf in oppoſition to truth and good counſel, does not condemn himſelf directly, when

[l] See Rom. ii. 1.

[m] See Hammond upon the text.

when he ought to do it, and amend: but he condemns himſelf indirectly, as acting againſt the law of his mind, againſt that general law, by which he condemns others, and juſtly, whenever they allow themſelves in wrong things, and might know better. This is his condemnation, that he approves in a particular inſtance through partiality what himſelf in the general condemns. All ſinners, in this, are ſelf condemned; and ſo are heretics alſo among the reſt. Indeed, all that do not make a proper uſe of their rational faculties, when they may and ought to do it, are thus ſelf condemned: and their own awakened conſciences will riſe up againſt them, at the laſt day, as men guilty of great prevarication and ſelf repugnancy, for allowing in themſelves, what they otherwiſe diſallow and condemn. *Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked ſervant*, will then be the ſentence due to all, who having been twice admoniſhed, for corrupting the faith, repented not of it, but perſevered in their errors both of judgment and practice, when they might have known better.

I defined hereſy not merely a miſtake of judgment (though in fundamentals) but eſpouſing ſuch erroneous judgment, either teaching and diſſeminating it, or openly ſupporting and aſſiſting thoſe that do, ſiding with them in it. This I conceive to be the true ſcripture notion of hereſy[n]. Nevertheleſs, an erroneous judgment in

[n] 1 Cor. xi. 19. Gal. v. 20. 2 Pet. ii. 1.

in fundamentals, has more commonly paſſed under the name of hereſy[a], and is undoubtedly a great fault, whatever name we call it by. It is running counter to all thoſe texts, which recommend zeal and earneſtneſs for the true faith: for how can a man conſiſtently with himſelf, be zealous for what he either diſbelieves, or aſſents not to? It is likewiſe running croſs to all thoſe texts which exhort to *ſound faith*, or which command us to *hold faſt what is good*, or forbid the being *toſſed to and fro* with every *wind of doctrine*, and the like. Whether ſuch fault ſhall be called hereſy or no, is only diſputing about a name: but that it is in itſelf (particular circumſtances excepted) a great offence againſt God, cannot be doubted; and it naturally leads to worſe.

2. Having largely treated of the nature and notion of hereſy, and what properly denominates any man a heretic, I am next to ſay ſomething of what is meant by rejecting ſuch perſons. After all prudent and proper means have been uſed to reclaim them, or ſilence them, and they ſtill perſiſt in their hereſy, either in teaching, or otherwiſe eſpouſing falſe and pernicious doctrines; then the rule of the apoſtle is to reject them, or caſt them off, if they have not before caſt off themſelves. The text does not ſay, excommunicate them; for that would not be neceſſary, when they have excommunicated themſelves: but it ſays, *ſhun* them, *avoid*

[a] See Hammond's Paræn. C. v. p. 364. Vol. iv.

avoid them, *reject* them; which, in caſe they do not caſt themſelves out, implies and infers a command to exclude them: ſo that the text, by that general expreſſion, ſeems to have provided for both the caſes.

But I muſt here again take notice of Dr. Whitby's miſtakes and falſe reaſonings. He was ſenſible, that according to his looſe definition of hereſy, there would be no knowing, for the moſt part, who is guilty of it, or who ought to be condemned for it: he produces the objection himſelf, and afterwards endeavours lamely to anſwer it. "It is objected," ſays he, "that "there be few who oppoſe the truth wittingly, "and they are only known to God, not to the "church; which therefore cannot admoniſh, "avoid, or excommunicate them[b]." An inſuperable objection againſt his notion, ſhewing that it terminates in a flat contradiction to ſcripture, and to the plaineſt reaſon. Well, how does he reply to it? The ſum of his anſwer is, "that Titus might have the diſcerning of ſpirits, "a gift belonging to thoſe times: and the "church that was in the days of the apoſtles, "could eaſily know, whether the doctrines "which others taught in oppoſition to them, "were indeed doctrines received from the apoſ-"tles or not: if they were not, they who "taught them muſt know, they received no "ſuch doctrine from them, and ſo muſt be "ſelf

[b] Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

" ſelf condemned in teaching it as received from " them, or as the faith once delivered to the " ſaints[c]." Never was there a looſer reply, in ſo momentous a cauſe. For, 1. This amounts to ſaying, that all the precepts about admoniſhing, avoiding, or excommunicating of heretics, and of conſequence, all the other precepts about preſerving ſound doctrine, or contending earneſtly for the faith, expired in a great meaſure as ſoon as the miraculous gifts, or gift of diſcerning ſpirits ceaſed. The precepts from that time forwards, became impracticable, becauſe no body now could know what was hereſy, or who heretics, ſince they could not ſee into men's hearts. Though heretics might ſubvert whole houſes (and now more than ever, when there ſhould be no apoſtle living to controul them) and though their *words might eat as doth a canker*; yet the church is left without remedy: the paſtors and guardians of it muſt not preſume to excommunicate, or avoid, or admoniſh perſons as heretics, unleſs they can firſt prove them heretics or ill-deſigning men: but if it be certain, that they are led by an erroneous conſcience, they muſt not be cenſured at all, but treated as good men and fellow chriſtians. " So that we are commanded to " avoid a heretic; but this heretic is ſuch a " ſort of a creature as no body can ever find " out, or diſtinguiſh from one he is to treat " as a brother. But ſuppoſe this heretic ſhould " tell

[c] Whitby on Tit. iii. 10.

" tell us, that he did not believe what himſelf " affirmed, then indeed he would be ſelf con- " demned, and we might know it. But he " muſt be a fool of a heretic who would de- " clare this, unleſs he intended to recant and " renounce his errors: and whenever he did " this, he would no longer be a heretic, no " longer to be avoided: and therefore being " ſelf condemned in this ſenſe, would be ſo far " from a reaſon why we ſhould avoid him, that " it would be a reaſon why we ſhould not avoid " him, but treat him as a brother[d]." 2. From the ſame principles it will follow, that the whole diſcipline of the church, after the time that the gift of diſcerning of ſpirits ceaſed, ſo far as concerned heretics, was raſh and unwarrantable: which no wiſe man will preſume to ſay or think. 3. It farther follows, that be hereſies ever ſo rife, and the faith ever ſo much endangered, there is no remedy for it: we cannot know in theſe times, (though the ſcriptures are allowed to be clear and perfect) what the doctrines of the apoſtles were, or whether the doctrines which others teach in oppoſition to them, are indeed doctrines received from the apoſtles, or not: however, if we may know that, yet without knowing men's hearts too, all our zeal for the ancient faith is fruitleſs and vain.

Such are the abſurdities which the learned doctor inevitably runs into, only for the ſake of a falſe favourite notion he had unwarily imbibed.

[d] Rogers's Review of the viſible and inviſible Church, p. 409.

bibed. The truth of the whole matter is, we have nothing to do with the inward motives or views of heretics. The miſchief lies in the falſe doctrines which they teach and propagate: and upon that account, and that only, they are to be admoniſhed, avoided, cenſured, in order to prevent the ſubverting whole houſes, and the like. Poſſibly ſuch falſe teachers may intend well: of that God is judge. But the faith of Chriſt, and the ſalvation of ſouls, muſt not be ſacrificed even to the known good intentions of any man, or men whatſoever; no, nor to the preaching even of an angel from heaven, were it a poſſible ſuppoſition.

But it may be objected; what, muſt innocent men ſuffer for the ſake of any good? Is that juſtice or equity? I anſwer, that they are innocent in this caſe, through an erroneous conſcience, and invincible ignorance, is more than man knows or can know: of that God is judge. But that corrupting the faith is not an innocent practice, (conſidered in itſelf) but a very ill thing, every one knows, or ought to know; and that is the rule for men to go by in judging, becauſe they can go by no other; and it is in the main both a ſafe and certain rule. And if it may ſometimes happen, that diſcerning and upright judges may condemn a man who is innocent in God's ſight, (becauſe of ſome unconquerable infirmity) while guilty in the eyes of man, this cannot be remedied. The good proceeding from ſuch cenſures, vaſtly overbalances it.

it. And what if after all, ſpiritual cenſures (for of ſuch only I am ſpeaking) ſhould happen to fall upon ſuch a perſon, he may be in ſome meaſure hurt in his reputation by it, and that is all[e]: and poſſibly hereupon his errors before invincible through ignorance, may be removed by wholſome inſtruction and admonitions, and ſo he is befriended in it, and may now come to have a covenant right to happineſs, who before ſtood only in uncovenanted mercy. For though God will condemn no man for what he could not help; yet he has promiſed no man a reward who ever ſo ignorantly corrupts the faith of the goſpel: but it is ſaid of the unlearned and unſtable, that when they wreſt the ſcriptures, it is to their own deſtruction. I have dwelt the longer upon this argument, becauſe it appears to me to be a very weighty affair, and not ſo well conſidered by many, as it ought to be. I now proceed in order to ſome other texts, relating to the avoiding heretics.

St. John's advice in that caſe, touched upon before, is, *If there come any one unto you, and bring not this doctrine*, (the doctrine of Chriſt in a material article) *receive him not into your houſe, neither bid him God ſpeed: for he that biddeth him God ſpead, is partaker of his evil deeds*[f]. The apoſtle here forbids a chriſtian to ſalute[g] a man, that perverts the goſpel in ſuch a certain article, being a fundamental one: what article he ſpoke of,

[e] See Addenda, p. 497.

[f] 2 John 10, 11.

[g] Χαίρειν αὐτῷ μὴ λέγετε.

of, I have intimated above. It is obſerved by interpreters, that denying a perſon the common forms of ſalutation, was the ſame with looking upon him as excommunicate[h]. And ſo theſe words of the apoſtle carry in them the force of an excommunication, with reſpect to the heretics there pointed to, and the force of a prohibition, with reſpect to other chriſtians, who are hereby forbidden to receive ſuch heretics into their houſes, or to pay them ſo much as common civilities[i]. This precept of the apoſtle may be further illuſtrated by his own practice, recorded by Irenæus, who had the information at ſecond hand from Polycarp a diſciple of St. John's, that St. John once meeting with Cerinthus at the Bath, retired inſtantly without bathing; for fear, ſaid he, leſt the bath ſhould fall, by reaſon of Cerinthus's being there, the enemy to truth[k]. The like ſtory is there alſo told of Polycarp himſelf, with regard to another ſuch heretic, namely Marcion. And Irenæus's juſt reflection upon the whole, is very obſervable in theſe words: "So extremely cau-
"tious were the apoſtles and their followers, to
"have no communication, no, not ſo much as
"in

[h] See Hammond and Whitby. [i] See Addenda, p. 498.

[k] Καὶ εἰσὶν οἱ ἀκηκόοτες αὐτοῦ, ὅτι Ἰωάννης, ὁτῦ κυρίυ μαθητὴς ἐν τῇ Ἐφέσῳ πορευθεὶς λύσασθαι, καὶ ἰδὼν ἔσω Κήρινθον, ἐξήλατο τοῦ βαλανείω, μὴ λυσάμενος, ἀλλ' ἐπειπών. Φύγωμεν, μὴ καὶ τὸ βαλανεῖον συμπέσῃ, ἔνδον ὄντος Κηρίνθυ τῦ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐχθρῦ.

Irenæ. L. iii. C. 3. p. 177. Bened. alias, 204. Grab.

Conf. Euſeb. Eccl. H. L. iii. C. 28. p. 123. Theodoret Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 3. p. 220.

" in diſcourſe with any man that adulterated the " truth[1]." A conduct, which, as he remarks, was conformable to St. Paul's rule, Tit. iii. 10. The reader will take notice by the way, that though Cerinthus and Marcion might be otherwiſe ill men, and might perhaps act upon bad motives, yet the ſtreſs of the thing lay not there; but it was their being enemies to truth, and their adulterating the truth, (in points fundamental) which made them ſo abhorred, and their company ſo deteſted by wiſe and holy men. No matter what their motives were, or their morals in other reſpects: they corrupted the faith of Chriſt, and in effect, ſubverted the goſpel. That was enough to render them deteſtable in the eyes of all men who ſincerely loved and valued ſound faith.

The biſhops of Pergamus and Thyatira are reproved by our Lord for ſuffering, that is, for not ejecting the Balaamites or Nicolaitans, who taught falſe doctrine, relating to the fundamentals of chriſtian practice. They taught the lawfulneſs of fornication, and of eating things offered to idols. That was a hereſy in doctrinals, immediately affecting the *agenda* of chriſtianity, the moral commands of ſcripture; which they very probably miſinterpreted and perverted, much after the ſame manner as others perverted ſuch texts as contain the *credenda*, matters of faith ſtrictly ſo called.

[1] Τοσαύτην οἱ Απόςολοι καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτῶν ἔσχον ἐυλάβειαν, πρὸς τὸ μηδὲ μεχρὶ λόγυ κοινωνεῖν τινὶ τῶν παραχαρασσόντων τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ὡς καὶ Παῦλος ἔφησεν· αἱρετικὸν ἄνθρωπον. κ. τ. λ. Iren. ibid.

called. There is not much difference in the main, between the two caſes; excepting that one is more groſs and ſcandalous, and ſhews itſelf in more ſenſible effects. There is the ſame preſumptuous tampering with ſcripture, the ſame kind of artificial eluſions, the like wire drawing of texts, in both caſes: and there is likewiſe the ſame kind of unbelief or diſbelief of God's ſacred word, only in different articles, and the like oppoſition to goſpel truths, only to different purpoſes. If any man through mere weakneſs of judgment ſhould have imbibed the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but reſolving at the ſame time never to divulge it, nor practiſe upon it, I ſee not what harm a bare opinion, and owing only to unavoidable infirmity, would do him, while dormant, and without effect. But if any perſon, through the like inſuperable weakneſs of judgment, ſhould entertain low and degrading notions of his God and Saviour, though he ſhould never divulge it, he would ſuffer ſome harm by it with reſpect to his religious ſervices, which would be thereby rendered leſs perfect: for in that caſe, the ill effect ſo far, is inſeparable from the falſe opinion; though I doubt not but all merciful allowances would be made for it. But as the criminal part in the former caſe, would lie chiefly in practiſing upon the perſuaſion, or in divulging it to the hurt of other perſons, ſo in this latter alſo, the moſt criminal circumſtance would be the eſpouſing and publicly ſupporting ſuch falſe perſuaſion

to the detriment of religion. For if he who ſhall break one of the *leaſt moral commandments*, and ſhall *teach men ſo*, ſhall be called *leaſt in the kingdom of heaven*, (Matt. v. 19.) it muſt be a very dangerous experiment for any man to preſume to teach any thing contrary to the goſpel of Chriſt in the main articles of faith, or doctrine, becauſe, the chriſtian life is nearly concerned in both, and the honour of God and religion are bound up with them. The paſtors or guardians of the chriſtian religion ought no more to ſuffer any notorious inſults upon the great credenda of our moſt holy religion, than upon the agenda; ſince both reſt upon the ſame foundation, have a cloſe connexion with each other, and are, for the moſt part, likely to ſtand or fall together.

II. I have now proved from direct ſcripture texts that it is the duty of Chriſtians to refuſe communion with thoſe who corrupt the faith of Chriſt in points fundamental, and perſiſt in ſo doing, after proper cautions and admonitions given them. I am in the next place to inforce the doctrine yet farther by conſiderations drawn from the very nature and reaſon of the thing, upon ſcripture principles. Piety towards God, charity towards other men, and juſtice towards our own ſouls, all conſpire to recommend and authorize ſuch conduct.

1. I ſay, piety towards God requires ſuch a conduct. For can it be thought, that when the high lord and governor of the univerſe vouchſafes

vouchſafes to ſpeak to us from heaven, and to reveal truths of importance, that good men ought patiently to bear the perverting of thoſe ſacred truths, or the adulterating of thoſe heavenly inſtructions? Earthly governors would reſent the putting falſe conſtructions upon their laws or edicts, or the wreſting them to quite different purpoſe from what they were intended for, to deceive, and miſlead their people: how much more ſhall the God of heaven reſent any indignities of that kind? It is the cauſe of God and religion, to reſcue the word of God from perverſe gloſſes and comments, and to preſerve it in its native purity and perfection. To admit thoſe who corrupt and deprave its ſenſe in any groſs manner, to the common honours and privileges of fellow chriſtians, would be the ready way to introduce all imaginable confuſion in faith and worſhip, and to deface Chriſtianity to ſuch a degree, that common chriſtians at leaſt could not know how or where to find it. For example: had the Cerinthians, Ebionites, Marcionites, Valentinians, Manichees, and other ſects, too numerous to mention, been all admitted as fellow Chriſtians, Chriſtianity muſt have been looked upon as the moſt uncertain, unconſtant, inconſiſtent thing in the world: and both the religion itſelf, and the ſcriptures which contain it, would very probably have been loſt before now, or have come down to us ſo mangled, adulterated, diſguiſed, that no one could know what to depend upon as true and ſincere,

either as to words, or ſenſe. The diſcriminating of heretics from faithful Chriſtians, and therewith preſerving the unity of the church, and the purity of doctrine, has been a principal means of fixing the chriſtian religion in its moſt material articles, and of ſupporting the honour of it, againſt all its enemies without, whether Jews, Pagans, or mere Infidels. So neceſſary was it to diſcountenance all attempts for ſubverting or perverting the truth as it was in Chriſt Jeſus, and to ſeparate the clean from the unclean, by rejecting heretics as unworthy of chriſtian communion, or even of the name of Chriſtians, except it were in a very large ſenſe.

2. As piety towards God and reverence towards his ſacred word required ſuch conduct; ſo likewiſe did charity towards men: charity towards the offenders, and charity towards all mankind. It was a charitable office towards the corruptors of the faith of Chriſt, to reject and diſown them, in order to make them *aſhamed*[a], and to bring them to repentance, that ſo their ſouls *might be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*[b]. It is true, that it often failed of having this ſalutary effect, as the judgments of God alſo often fail, and where they do not cure, they irritate and harden, and render worſe; which is no argument againſt the ſalutary nature of the remedy, but ſhows only the incurable diſorder of the patient. Indeed, St. Paul does

[a] 2 Theſſ. iii. 14. [b] 1 Cor. v. 5.

does diſtinguiſh his coming *with the rod* of excommunication, from his coming in *love and in the ſpirit of meekneſs*[c]: not as if ſuch diſcipline were not an inſtance of love, or were not perfectly conſiſtent with a ſpirit of meekneſs, but it was not love in every view, or in every ſenſe of the word, like the love ſhewn towards the faithful in all the outward expreſſions of approbation and friendlineſs; for the caſe did not admit of it. It was love mingled with wholeſome ſeverity, the truer love for being ſo mingled, when the neceſſity of the caſe required it: wounds they were, but of a friend ſtill, and in a caſe where the kindeſt of friends could not otherwiſe ſhow themſelves kinder than by ſo doing. Meekneſs it was not, under that preciſe formality, but conſiſtent with all that could be called chriſtian meekneſs: for to forbear ſharpneſs and ſeverity, in ſuch a caſe, is not meekneſs, but tameneſs, and Laodicean lukewarmneſs. So that the exerciſe of proper diſcipline, in ſuch inſtances, is in reality fervent love and charity towards the offenders themſelves, in a ſpiritual view, but expreſſing itſelf in the harſher way, the only way left for it towards men in their circumſtances. Palliating medicines would be cruel and barbarous applications, when corroſives are the only means left to recover the patient, and to effect the cure[d]. Upon the whole therefore,

[c] 1 Cor. iv. 21.

[d] The objections made to the method, as not proper, are abundantly anſwered by a very learned prelate. Potter on church-government, p. 399, &c.

fore, charity towards the offenders themſelves, requires ſuch a conduct as I have been mentioning.

There can be leſs appearance for any queſtion, whether it be not alſo charity towards all men beſides. It is charity towards the ignorant, as carrying inſtruction along with it; charity towards the unwary, as giving them warning to ſtand off from infection; charity towards the confirmed Chriſtians, as encouraging them ſtill more, and preſerving them from inſults; charity towards the whole church, as ſupporting both their unity and purity; charity towards all mankind, towards them that are without, as it is recommending pure religion to them, in the moſt advantageous light obviating their moſt plauſible calumnies, and giving them leſs occaſion to blaſpheme.

3. I obſerve, in the third place, that juſtice to our own ſouls requires, that we uſe all prudent and proper endeavours to diſcountenance hereſies by refuſing communion with their open favourers and abettors. For otherwiſe, as St. John ſpeaks, we become *partakers of their evil doings*. To own them as fellow Chriſtians, is to take their guilt upon ourſelves, or greater. I ſay, greater, becauſe ſuppoſing them ſo far innocent as honeſtly to follow their own judgment, yet while we are of a contrary judgment, it cannot but be guilty practice and conduct in us, and very great too, to ſmother our ſentiments, or not to bear our teſtimony in ſuch

ſuch a way as Chriſt has appointed, againſt all notorious corruptions either of faith, or worſhip, or doctrine. It appears then ſufficiently both from ſcripture directly, and from the very nature and reaſon of the thing, that it is our bounden duty to refuſe communion with thoſe that perſiſt in oppoſing the fundamental articles of our moſt holy religion. I am aware that ſeveral objections have been made, and will be made to what Chriſt has ordered, and the church has all along practiſed as concerning our conduct in this article: for what is there ſo juſt, ſo rational, or ſo commendable, that may not be objected to? however in order to ſatisfy reaſonable men at leaſt, I deſign a diſtinct chapter for the further clearing up the queſtion in had.

CHAP. V.

Objections removed, and ſome vulgar miſtakes rectified.

HAVING laid down our principles, and the grounds upon which we go, our next concern is to remove or obviate whatever threatens to overturn them, or to leſſen their force, leſt any weak objections on one ſide, leſt un-

anſwered, may prevail more with ſome perſons than the ſtrongeſt arguments on the other. I proceed then to the buſineſs.

I. It may have been ſometimes invidiouſly ſuggeſted, that the inſiſting ſo ſtrongly upon the neceſſity of believing, or however of not oppoſing this doctrine, is carrying matters to an immoderate height, and tends to provoke others to run into a contrary extreme out of a kind of indignation, and exceſſive renitence. The plea is ſmooth and ſpecious, and appears to carry a fair ſhew of lenity and moderation in it, which are virtues much to be admired; but in reality it contains little, as here applied, more than an artful abuſe, and ſuch as is frequently played with in other the like caſes. For the purpoſe: if any perſon is diſpoſed to undermine the inſpiration of ſacred writ, he begins uſually with complaints of the ſtiffneſs and dogmaticalneſs of common divines, which prejudice men of freer thoughts, as is pretended, againſt ſcripture itſelf, and almoſt force them into another extreme. So again, if any man has a mind to relax the ſtrictneſs of the goſpel rule, and to bring it down to his taſte, he falls to declaming againſt the exceſſive rigour of religioniſts, which frighten many ſober perſons, as is ſaid, from embracing religion. Complaints of that kind may ſometimes be juſt, but they are oftner mere artifice. It will be proper to examine, in the firſt place, what truth there is in the ſuggeſtions brought about

about our running into extremes. Without all queſtion, extremes are carefully to be avoided in every thing. Extreme cold may be as bad as extreme heat: and extreme lenity is a fault, as much as extreme ſeverity. But the thing to be proved is, that the inſiſting upon the doctrine of the Trinity, as an eſſential article, is an extreme, or that it is not in reality the true and golden mean between rigour on one hand, and lukewarmneſs on the other. It may be true, that the inſiſting upon this doctrine, may have that accidental effect, to prejudice weak minds the more againſt it, or againſt religion itſelf. In like manner, the inſiſting upon the doctrine of the croſs, the duty of ſelf denial, and the neceſſity of univerſal righteouſneſs, may have prejudiced many againſt Chriſtianity, and yet daily do ſo. But ſtill if the doctrine be both true, and important, it muſt be taught and inculcated: and the queſtion in ſuch caſes is not, whether many may not be offended or ſcandalized at any doctrine, but whether the doctrine be ſuch as ought to be inſiſted upon. For as a very judicious and learned prelate[e] has appoſitely obſerved, "St. Paul has plainly "taught us, how we ought to conduct our-"ſelves in ſuch caſes. He knew very well, "that Jew and Gentile took great offence at "the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, and he "could not but ſee that Chriſtianity would "be

[e] Biſhop of London. In his Charge of May 28, 1730. p. 28.

" be more favourably entertained by both, if " that offence were removed, and the goſpel " reduced to a ſcheme of mere morality, rati- " fied by a perſon ſent from God, and inforced " by ſtronger aſſurances of rewards and puniſh- " ments than had ever been given before. But, " notwithſtanding all this, *we* (ſays he) *preach* " *Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling block,* " *and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſs*[f]." The reaſon is plain: for, the miniſters of Chriſt are under ſpecial direction, and muſt not dare to prevaricate in their ſacred employment. They muſt never preſume to betray the truth of the goſpel with any view to prevent offence: for, ſuch offence is taken, not given, and is therefore of no moment. They only are to bear the blame, who are cauſeleſsly offended at what they ought to receive with the profoundeſt reſpect and veneration.

I may here alſo take notice, that when ſome perſons of more warmth than wiſdom, have gone upon what they call healing meaſures, in order to reconcile many (as they ſuppoſed) to Chriſtianity ſhortened and curtailed in its prime articles, they have been for the moſt part miſerably diſappointed. Their unwarrantable conceſſions, inſtead of making more Chriſtians (half Chriſtians, I ſhould ſay) have only made more infidels. And it was natural to think, that ſuch would the reſult be. For when once the advocates

[f] 1 Cor. i. 23.

cates for religion begin to recede beyond what they have warrant for, they give very great advantage to the enemy, who may then modeſtly expect to draw them on farther, upon the ſame motive, or principle, which had before carried them too far. For, if they yield to importunity, rather than to reaſon in one caſe, why not in another? or if the firſt ſtep taken out of the way, could appear rational, why not a ſecond, and a third, and ſo on, till there be no end of wandering? It is frequently the fate of thoſe over complying gentlemen, that while they ſtoop too low in hopes to fetch others up, they are themſelves dragged down, and can never recover it. They are inſenſibly carried over to the party towards which they lean; and inſtead of preſerving a balance (which they loſt in the firſt decline) they are at length found to run in with the other extreme. The epiſcopian neutrality ſeldom ſtays long, before it paſſes over into arianiſm or ſocinianiſm; and theſe again eaſily degenerate into deiſm and atheiſm. It is much to be queſtioned, whether myſteries, after all, are really the things which are moſt apt to offend the faſhionable world: the purity of the goſpel precepts is the hardeſt of digeſtion; and one commandment, very probably, may make greater difficulty than many creeds. But the principal reaſon with many for ſtriking at myſteries firſt, is, becauſe it is more decent to begin there; and after a breach once made in the main fabric, it is eaſy to go on to a total ſubverſion.

ſubverſion. The deiſts, in their turn, take up the ſame topics of moderation and lenity: "Let "not the men of faith deſpiſe the men of rea- "ſon; and again, let not the men of reaſon deſpiſe "the men of faith, ſo long as both agree in the "ſubſtantial duties:" this is the cant. And truly, if moderation is to ſtand for yielding and complying, be it right or wrong; and if that be all the rule we have to go by, I do not ſee that the men argue amiſs. But ſurely we muſt ſtop ſomewhere: and where can we better ſtop, than at neceſſaries, at truths and important truths? for things of that value ought never to be ſacrificed to any temporal conſiderations, or to any views of a falſe and ſhort lived peace.

From hence it may be inferred that it is not owing to any immoderate rigours of the more cautious divines, if infidelity happens to gain ground, but to the immoderate and extravagant conceſſions of thoſe who are not ſo careful as they ſhould be, to keep up the ancient faith in its firſt purity and perfection. Accordingly it may be obſerved, how the unbelievers careſs and compliment thoſe complying gentlemen who meet them half way, while they are perpetually inveighing againſt the ſtiff divines, as they call them, whom they can make no advantage of. They know their friends from their foes: and it may be learned from them how the caſe ſtands: fas eſt et ab hoſte doceri.

To

To illuſtrate and confirm the general obſervations, let the reader reflect a little upon the unhappy conduct of Socinus, and the upſhot of it. He had contrived a ſyſtem for his friends to abide by, and he hoped they would reſt there: but many of them, upon the ſame principles, whereby he had led them ſo far, reſolved to go farther, throwing off the worſhip of Chriſt, in conſequence of the mean opinion they had entertained of him. Socinus reclaimed, remonſtrated, cried out aloud, hoping to ſtop their progreſs, by his earneſtneſs (for he had yielded too much before to talk of reaſon now) and to fetch them back; but all to no purpoſe. He repreſented to them the dreadful conſequences of diſcarding the divine worſhip of Chriſt: "That it was rendering the whole chriſtian "religion weak and precarious, was ſapping the "main foundation of their faith and hope, and "grievouſly offending God the Father, and "Chriſt Jeſus[g]: that he had never yet met with "any man of true piety and godlineſs who "durſt venture upon it, but that he knew ſe-"veral of them who had thereupon turned "epicureans,

[g] Ipſius Chriſti univerſa religio in dubium revocatur, aut ſaltem mutationi, et fini in hoc ipſo ſeculo obnoxia redditur; ſummum et præſtantiſſimum noſtræ Spei et Fidei in Deum fundamentum nobis eripitur; ac denique, ne omnia hinc provenientia mala et incommoda, quæ innumerabilia ſunt, enumerare hic nunc velle videar, in ipſum Chriſtum et Deum Patrem graviſſimè peccatur.

Socin. ad Radec. Epiſt. iii. p. 387.

" epicureans, or downright atheiſts[h]." All which was true: but why could not he have ſeen that atheiſm hung at the end of the chain, till he came to the laſt link? never did man more expoſe himſelf than Socinus did in that inſtance. For indeed the throwing off the divine worſhip of Chriſt was but the natural and inevitable conſequence of his ſcheme, if one would act conſiſtently: and the next conſequence to that, was deiſm, or atheiſm, by his own account. So it was plainly telling the world, that he had drawn his diſciples into a labyrinth, and knew not how to extricate them. To go back was a mortifying thought to vain men; to go forwards, was to plunge into downright atheiſm. Such generally is the fate of the ſelf opinionated, who will not liſten to ſober counſels in time, but precipitately ſtrike off from the right way to follow they know not what, or to fix they know not where. I might mention thoſe amongſt us who began with *Chriſtianity not myſterious*[i], and in a few

[h] Socinus. Quotquot ego vidi adorationis Chriſti oppugnatores, omnes tandem in atheiſmum ſunt prolapſi; quod et tibi accidet, niſi ſententiam mutaveris.

Non dixit Socinus, omnes quos ipſe vidiſſet adorationis Chriſti oppugnatores tandem in atheiſmum fuiſſe prolapſos; ſed neminem ſe ex iſtorum numero adhuc noviſſe, qui chriſtiana pietate et vitæ ſanctimonia eſſet præditus; imò nonnullos ex ipſis ſe vidiſſe aut ſciviſſe epicureos, et planè atheos factos. Nec mirum eſſe, cum hæc ad epicureiſmum et atheiſmum homini Chriſti ſacris initiato via compendiaria quædam foret. Diſput. inter F. S. et Chriſtian. Franken. p. 772, 773.

[i] A book publiſhed with that title. A. D. 1696.

few years after ſettled in pantheiſm[k] little ſhort of the broadeſt atheiſm: and others might be named, who from finding fault with the council of Nice, for corrupting Chriſtianity[l] (as they fondly ſuppoſed) have gradually, and in a courſe of years, come to reject Chriſtianity itſelf, as needleſs and uſeleſs, and all revealed religion as rubbiſh[m]. When once men break off from the reverence due to ſacred writ, and to the eminent lights of the beſt and pureſt ages, they roll downwards apace, and very rarely recover it. For if they were not ſtrong enough to ſtand at firſt upon plain and firm ground, how ſhall they keep ſteady afterwards upon a declivity? I ſay then, that the blame lies not upon thoſe who abide unmoveable in the old well tried doctrine of the Trinity, but upon thoſe that are ſoon ſhaken in mind, and depart from it. To adhere firmly to it, is not rigour, but conſtancy: and to forſake it, or to grow indifferent towards it, is not prudence or moderation, but unmanly levity, and wantonneſs, or ſomething worſe.

II. It is ſometimes pleaded, that a wicked life is the worſt hereſy, intimating as if breaches made in our moſt holy faith were of ſlight conſideration, ſo long as a man lives a good moral life, in other reſpects. I readily allow that a wicked life is the worſt thing imaginable: but I conceive further,

[k] The Pantheiſticon, publiſhed A. D. 1720.

[l] Rights of the chriſtian church, p. 196, &c. pub. 1706.

[m] Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, p. 421. publiſhed 1730.

further, that the eſpouſing and propagating of corrupt doctrines, is leading a wicked life, in the ſtricteſt ſenſe. I ſpeak not of mere miſtakes in judgment, but of eſpouſing and propagating them; corrupting the faith in important articles, and diffuſing ſuch corruptions. A life ſo ſpent, is a wicked life, if oppoſing divine truths, undermining the goſpel, and ſubverting ſouls, be wicked attempts, as they undoubtedly are. It muſt be owned, that a good life is every thing to a chriſtian. But what does a good life conſiſt of? univerſal righteouſneſs in faith and manners. Therefore to talk of a man's leading a good life while he is corrupting the faith and diſſeminating pernicious doctrines, is talking contradictions. As to the ſincerity, or good meaning of the men who do it, that ſhall be conſidered under another article: I ſpeak now of the nature and quality of the thing, abſtracted from the circumſtances of the perſon: and I ſay, it is wickedneſs and a perfect contradiction to a good life. It is evil in itſelf, and the iniquity of it is fixed in the nature and reaſon of things.

Some have ſeemed to wonder * why commonly

* The author of the *Defence of ſcripture as the only ſtandard of faith* is one of thoſe wonderers. (p. 40.) But he intirely miſtakes the caſe, oppoſing imperfection in knowledge which is his ſoft name for hereſy, to imperfection in practice: whereas hereſy is not barely imperfection in knowledge, but it is evil practice; for eſpouſing pernicious doctrines is a fault in the conduct of life. Therefore the oppoſition lies between one evil practice, and another, and the queſtion is, which is worſt.

monly a warmer zeal ſhould be ſhewn againſt hereſies, than againſt ordinary immoralities: the wonder will preſently ceaſe, if the caſe be but rightly ſtated. Aſk, whether one that commits fornication, or one that teaches and inculcates it, as lawful practice, is the wickeder man? here the caſe is plain, that the heretic who takes pains to ſpread ſuch diſſolute doctrine, and to debauch the principles of the age, is incomparably a viler man, than he that barely perpetrates the ſin. So then it muſt be allowed, that an heretic in morality, is infinitely a greater ſinner, than one who through his luſts and paſſions, merely leads an immoral life.

So, as to faith, aſk, whether a man that perverts any material article, either careleſly, or through ſome prejudice, but lets it go no farther, or one that does the ſame thing, and then takes upon him to teach and inculcate the erroneous doctrine to others; I ſay, aſk which of the two is the wickeder man? the latter, undoubtedly. He is the heretic in teaching and patronizing a corruption of faith, while the other who corrupts it only for himſelf, is no formal heretic, as I conceive, in ſtrict propriety of ſpeech[a], though not

[a] Qui ſententiam ſuam, quamvis falſam atque perverſam, nulla pertinaci animoſitate defendunt, præſertim quam non audacia præſumptionis ſua pepererunt, ſed a ſeductis atque in errorem lapſis parentibus acceperunt; quærunt autem cauta ſolicitudine veritatem, corrigi parati cum invenerint, nequaquam ſunt inter hæreticos deputandi. Auguſtin. Epiſt. xliii. p. 88. ed. Benedict.

not a good man. Thus, while we compare an heretic in morality with a man merely immoral; or an heretic in faith with a man that is merely a miſbeliever; it is obvious to perceive that there is much greater malignity in thoſe that teach or eſpouſe what they ought not, than in thoſe that merely believe wrong, or do wrong: Becauſe the leaders and abettors of any ill thing, diffuſe the miſchief all around; the other let it die with them. Thus far, I preſume, is plain and clear.

After thus comparing kind with kind, let us next take them as it were acroſs, and compare the heretic in faith with an immoral man, in the common ſenſe of the word. We will allow that an heretic in matters of mere revelation, is not ſo bad a man, generally ſpeaking, as an heretic in morality; but ſtill he may be a much worſe man, or to ſpeak plainer, may do a great deal more miſchief by his doctrine, than the immoral man may do by his example. For beſides his propagating dangerous errors, ſubverting ſouls, it is farther to be conſidered, that he ſets himſelf up as a rival teacher, in oppoſition to the faithful miniſters of Chriſt: he weakens their hands, fruſtrates their pious labours, perverts their flocks, leſſens their eſteem in the eyes of their people, gives the common enemy a handle to inſult and blaſpheme, raiſes a kind of flame and war in the church, and remotely adminiſters to all immorality and diſſoluteneſs of manners, by taking off the influence of the beſt inſtructions

inſtructions of their more knowing and more edifying guides. Theſe are no ſlight miſchiefs, but great, and wide, and often of long continuance, and in ſeveral reſpects, irreparable[b]. Therefore let it not be thought ſtrange, if the moſt holy and excellent men have ever expreſſed the greateſt deteſtation of all attempts of that kind. Scarcely is a man excuſable for advancing even a truth, to the detriment of public peace, if it be of a ſlight nature, not worth the contending for, or ſuch as might innocently be dropped: but to advance falſehoods, (and in points very material) tending to create infinite diſturbances here, as well as to betray many to perdition hereafter; theſe are crimes unpardonable if the authors ſee what they do: if they do not, yet their guilt remains if they might ſee, and will not. However, the nature and quality of the thing is not altered by their ſeeing or not ſeeing: for hereſy is ſtill hereſy, though

[b] Mr. Bayle deſcribes it thus: "I do not know where we "can find out crimes, which are not of a leſs heinous nature "than that of rending the myſtical body of Jeſus Chriſt, "that ſpouſe which he has redeemed which his blood, that "mother which begets us to God, which nouriſhes us with "the milk of that wiſdom which is without guile, which "leads us to everlaſting bliſs. What fouler crime can we "think of, than rebelling againſt ſuch a mother, than de"faming her all the world over, endeavouring to ſtir up her "children againſt her, tearing them from her boſom by mil"lions, to drag them, as much as in us lies, to everlaſting "flames, them and their poſterity from generation to genera"tion? Where can we find the firſt rate high treaſon againſt "the divine majeſty, unleſs in inſtances of this kind?" Supplem. to Philoſoph. Commentary. pref. p. 517.

though a man intends well, as much as perſecution is ſtill perſecution, though a perſon thinks and believes, that he *does God ſervice* in it. Let it not therefore be imagined, that falſe teachers are to be numbered among the ſmaller offenders, or that they are not, generally ſpeaking, the greateſt of ſinners. Accordingly, we find, our bleſſed Lord never ſhewed a keener reſentment againſt any men whatever, than againſt falſe prophets[c], or thoſe who taught falſe doctrines[d] in oppoſition to divine truths. I interpret falſe prophets ſo as to include falſe teachers, ſuch at leaſt as corrupt ſound doctrine in any fundamental article: and ſo Grotius and Hammond interpret, like judicious and knowing men. But Dr. Whitby diſliking that conſtruction, advances ſome odd ſpeculations, to pervert the true meaning of the texts. He pleads that all falſe teachers[e], all that aſſert any thing wrong, are not included. Perhaps not: but yet all that manifeſtly pervert the faith, in any great degree, may be included notwithſtanding; yea and muſt be, by parity of reaſon. He pretends it to be ridiculous, to judge of falſe teachers, by falſe doctrines. But how can we judge better of a falſe teacher, than by falſehood of what he teaches? It is the very rule which St. John lays

[c] Matt. vii. 15. xxiv. 24. Mark xiii. 22. Compare Acts xx. 29, 30. See Grotius and Hammond on Matt. vii. 15.

[d] Matt. xv. 4—9. [e] Whitby on Matt. vii. 15.

lays down[f], and ſo does St. Paul[g]; which might have deterred any conſidering man from calling it ridiculous. Beſides, in the very reaſon of the thing, what rule could be pitched upon either ſurer or wiſer? Falſe teachers would pretend extraordinary endowments of learning perhaps, or ſanctity, or piety, and an affectionate concern for the happineſs of thoſe whom they ſhould addreſs themſelves to: but they might be detected by their fruits[h]. For if their doctrine ſhould be found contrary to the doctrine of Chriſt, that is conviction at once, and all their glozing pretences are worth nothing. They are falſe prophets, becauſe their doctrines are falſe: what can be a plainer proof of it? neither is it any objection to this, that our Lord afterwards ſpeaks of *doing the will of his Father*, and of *working iniquity:* for maintaining the truth, is doing God's will; and corrupting or reſiſting it, is working iniquity.

[f] 1 John iv. 2, 3. 2 John 9, 10, 11.

[g] 1 Cor. xii. 3.

[h] Ἆρα γε ἐκ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν ἐπιγνώσεσθε αὐτούς. Ἱκανὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ αὐτὰ καθ' ἑαυτὰ τὰ δυσαγῆ καὶ βαμμίαρα δόγματα τὸν οἰκεῖον ἐπιδείξαι πατέρα· ἐκ γὰρ τῆ καρπῆ, φησὶ, τὸ δένδρον γινώσκεται. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. iii. p. 226.

Sed quid ait Salvator? ex fructibus eorum cognoſcetis eos; id eſt, cum cœperint divinas illas voces non jam proferre tantum, ſed etiam exponere, nec adhuc jactare ſolùm, ſed etiam interpretari; tunc amaritudo illa, tunc acerbitas, tunc rabies intelligetur, tunc novitium virus exhalabitur, tunc prophanæ novitates aperientur; tunc primùm ſcindi ſepem videas, tunc transferri patrum terminos, tunc catholicam fidem cædi, tunc eccleſiaſticum dogma lacerari. Vincent. Lirinenſ. Commonit. Cap. xxxvi.

iniquity. Therefore let this be included at leaſt among other bad fruits, other works of iniquity; for it is properly ſuch. Dr. Whitby pretends further, that falſe prophets is not a name for falſe teachers at large, or for heretics: that appears to be his meaning. But yet certain it is from the new Teſtament, and from ſome of the texts which he himſelf produces, that it is. St. Peter makes the name of falſe prophets equivalent to that of falſe teachers, who ſhould *bring in damnable hereſies*[i]. And St. John gives the name of falſe prophets[k] to the heretics of his time; namely, to the Docetæ, and Cerinthians, and others of like ſtamp, as I have partly obſerved already and ſhall more fully ſhew in a ſucceeding chapter. Therefore it is right to interpret the falſe prophets which our Lord ſpeaks of, in ſuch a ſenſe as to include all heretics, all falſe teachers, who in any grievous manner, or degree, ſhould pervert the goſpel of Chriſt. And ſo the primitive fathers interpret our Lord's words*.

As our Lord himſelf made uſe of a particular ſharpneſs of expreſſion againſt falſe teachers, or heretics, ſo alſo did his apoſtles after him. St. Paul has done it very often againſt thoſe *grievous wolves*,

[i] 2 Pet. ii. 1. [k] 1 John iv. 1.

* Juſtin. Martyr. dialog. p. 100, 101, 249. ed. Jebb. alias 208, 316. Thirlby.
Tertullian. Præſcript. C. iv. xliv.
Cyrill. Hieroſol. Catech. iv. 1.
Hieronym. in Matt. vii. 15. xxiv. 24.
Athanaſ. ad Epiſc. Ægypt. et Lib. 270, 272.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. iii. Præf. p. 225.

wolves, (as he calls them) which may appear in ſome meaſure from what has been cited above: I ſhall only refer to ſome noted texts[l], to avoid prolixity; but obſerving alſo in paſſing, that though St. Paul delivered an immoral man over to Satan[m] for his incontinence, yet he did not uſe ſo ſtrong an expreſſion as anathema, or accurſed, which he pronounced upon heretics[n]. St. Peter is exceeding tart againſt ſome falſe teachers of his days[o], who *privily brought in damnable hereſies, even denying the Lord that bought them*. They taught men to ſit looſe from all decent rule and order, and under pretence of chriſtian liberty, to run riot in luxury and diſſolute behaviour. They were heretics in morality, as well as in faith, and of the worſt kind: and therefore what is ſaid of them, is not applicable to other falſe teachers in the ſame degree, but in proportion to the malignity of their reſpective hereſy. The Nicolaitans, I ſuppoſe, were the men whom St. Peter pointed to[p]. I hinted that they were heretics in faith, becauſe their doctrine, relating to God and Chriſt, was much the ſame with that of Cerinthus, as Irenæus teſtifies of them[q]: and thus we may eaſily underſtand why St. Peter ſays of them, that

[l] Acts xx. 29, 30. Rom. xvi. 17, 18. Gal. i. 8, 9.—v. 10, 12. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.—iv. 1, 2, 3.—vi. 3, 4, 5. 2 Tim. ii. 16, 17, 18. 2 Tim. iii. 1—9. Tit. i. 10—16. iii. 10, 11.

[m] 1 Cor. v. 5. [n] Gal. i. 8, 9.

[o] 2 Pet. ii. 1, 2, 3.

[p] Vid. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſt. p. 600.

[q] Iren. L. iii. C. xi. Conf. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 367, 383, 406.

that they *denied the Lord that bought them.* St. Jude expreſſes himſelf with uncommon warmth againſt the ſame falſe teachers, whom St. Peter had before cenſured. St. John, who was all love and meekneſs, and charity, yet ſeverely laſhes the heretics of his times, either ſuch as denied Chriſt's humanity, or ſuch as impugned his divinity; which I ſhall ſhew in due time and place. The names which he beſtows upon them are as follows, *antichriſts*[r], *liars*[s], *ſeducers*[t], *falſe prophets*[v], *deceivers*[w]. He ſcrupled not to go wandering upon the mountains, in queſt of a wicked robber, a captain of a gang in order to recover him to Chriſt, and he did recover him[y]: but with the heretic Cerinthus, a corrupter of the truth, he would not ſtay under the ſame roof[z]: by which it may appear, how much he deteſted hereſies above common immoralities. His diſciple Ignatius, an apoſtolical man, was exactly of the ſame ſentiments. For, ſays he, (ſpeaking of them that commit adultery, and the like) "They that *corrupt* (debauch) "families, *ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God:* "therefore, if they who do ſuch things according to the fleſh, periſh; how much more he, "who by his pernicious doctrine corrupts that "divine faith, for the which Jeſus Chriſt was "crucified? Such a man ſo defiled ſhall go into "fire

[r] Vid. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 594.
[s] 1 John ii. 18, 22.—iv. 3. 2 John 7. [t] 1 John ii. 22.
[u] 1 John ii. 26. [w] 1 John iv. 1. [x] 2 John 9.
[y] Euſeb. E. H. L. iii. C. 23. Clem. Alex. p. 959. ed. Ox.
[z] See above p. 127.

a fire unquenchable;" and ſo alſo ſhall he that hearkens unto him[a]. See from hence how this holy biſhop, ſoon after a martyr, abominated hereſies beyond even great immoralities, as being of more diffuſive and more laſting malignity, and not deſtroying men's bodies, but ſubverting their ſouls. His ſcholar Polycarp, another eminent biſhop of thoſe times, was a man of exemplary ſeverity againſt all kinds of ſinners, but againſt none ſo much as againſt Marcion, a noted heretic, whom he calls the firſtborn of Satan[b]. I ſhall mention but one authority more, the very pious and holy St. Cyprian, of the third century. He argues the point at length, that a heretic is a much wickeder man than one that lapſed into idolatry under perſecution. He ſtates the compariſon to this effect. "This is a worſe "crime than that which the lapſers may ſeem "to have committed, who yet do a ſevere "penance for their crime, and implore the "mercy of God by a long and plenary ſatis-"faction. The one ſeeks to the church, and "humbly intreats her favour, the other reſiſts "the

[a] Οἱ οἰκοφθόροι βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν· εἰ οὖν οἱ κατὰ σάρκα ταῦτα πράσσοντες ἀπέθανον, πόσῳ μᾶλλον ἐὰν πίστει θεοῦ ἡ κακὴ διδασκαλία φθείρῃ, ὑπὲρ ἧς Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐσταυρώθη; ὁ τοιοῦτος ῥυπαρὸς γινόμενος, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον χωρήσει, ὁμοίως καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ. Ignat. ad Epheſ. C. xvi.

[b] Polycarpus Marcioni aliquando occurrenti ſibi et dicenti, cognoſcis nos? reſpondit, cognoſco te primogenitum ſatanæ. Tantum apoſtoli et horum diſcipuli habuerunt timorem, ut nec verbo communicarent alicui eorum qui adulteraverant veritatem, Iren. L. iii. C. 3. Conf. Euſeb. E. H. L. iv. C. 14. The like is obſerved of Juſtin, and Irenæus, by Ittigius Hiſtor. Eccleſ. Sæc. 2. p. 91.

"the church, and proclaims open war againſt "her. The one has the excuſe of neceſſity, "the other is retained by his own wilfulneſs "only. He that lapſes only hurts himſelf; but "he that endeavours to make a hereſy or ſchiſm, "draws many after him. Here is only the "loſs of one ſoul; but there a multitude are "endangered. The lapſer is ſenſible that he "has done amiſs, and therefore mourns and "laments for it: but the other proudly ſwells in "his crime, pleaſes himſelf in his miſconduct, "divides the children from their mother, draws "away the ſheep from the paſtor, and diſturbs "the ſacraments of God: and whereas a lapſer "ſins but once, the other ſins daily[a]."

From the authorities I have given, it may abundantly appear that Chriſt and his apoſtles, and their followers, have, in a very diſtinguiſhing manner, expreſſed their abhorrence of *falſe prophets*, *falſe apoſtles*, *falſe teachers*; that is to ſay, of heretics, and their open favourers or abettors. It is true, there may be great difference between hereſy and hereſy; and what is ſaid of hereſies in general, is not applicable in the ſame meaſure or degree to every hereſy in particular, but in proportion only: in the mean while however, it is evident, that hereſy is not a thing of ſlight moment, but a crime of the firſt magnitude, if underſtood to mean the eſpouſing of falſe doctrines, tending to corrupt either faith or morals in any conſiderable inſtances. But I ſuppoſe,

[a] Cyprian. de Unitat. Eccl. p. 117.

ſuppoſe, they who think lightly of it, mean only ſome ignorant or careleſs miſtake in judgment, which a man keeps to himſelf, and diſturbs not the world with: which indeed does not amount to hereſy (as I have more than once ſaid) does not make a heretic. Hereſy lies not merely in the inward thought, but in the overt acts, either teaching pernicious doctrines, or ſupporting or encouraging them that do. Hereſy ſo conſidered is evil doing[a], and is condemned among the works of the fleſh[b]. So then, inſtead of ſaying, that a wicked life is the worſt hereſy, which is ſcarce ſenſe[c], I ſhould chooſe rather to ſay, what is both ſenſe and truth, (generally ſpeaking) that a life of hereſy is a moſt wicked life: it is joining with Satan and his emiſſaries, in a formed oppoſition to God and his church, is complicated impiety and immorality.

III. But it will be pleaded further, that ſuch as teach falſe doctrines, may be very ſincere; and their ſincerity will be their protection before the awful tribunal, or however ought to ſcreen them from cenſure here. But it behoves us to conſider well of this ſo ſovereign a preſervative, that we may not truſt too far to it; becauſe if it ſhould fail at laſt, there is nothing then left to depend on. Sincerity, I obſerve, is a very equivocal ambiguous term, uſed in more ſenſes than one: and therefore, before I enter deeper into the ſubject, I would diſtinguiſh it into two kinds.

1. Sincerity

[a] 2 John 11. [b] Gal. v. 20. [c] See Addenda, p. 498.

1. Sincerity as oppoſed to hypocriſy and pretence. 2. Sincerity, as oppoſed to prejudice and partiality. There is no diſcourſing clearly upon the point, without attending carefully to this diſtinction. Next then let us examine how the preſent queſtion about the iniquity of teaching falſe doctrines, or the juſtice of cenſuring them, is at all affected by what is pleaded of the ſincerity of the teachers, taking ſincerity either in this, or in that ſenſe.

1. Conſider we, firſt, ſincerity as oppoſed to hypocriſy and pretence. Suppoſe the teachers of falſe doctrine to be verily perſuaded in their minds and conſciences, that ſuch their doctrine is true, and their conduct right, and that they ought to teach it: this is bringing the matter to the caſe of an erroneous conſcience, upon our preſent ſuppoſition, that their doctrine is falſe, and ours true. Well then, what does an erroneous conſcience amount to? will it juſtify men in evil practices? or is it ſufficient to bear them out againſt cenſure from others? No, by no means. Time was when many thought it their duty to kill Chriſt's diſciples; they believed it to be doing God ſervice[a]: and yet nobody can doubt but thoſe ſincere men ſo far, were guilty of murder, and no one can think it an hard cenſure upon them, to declare ſo. St. Paul in particular, before his converſion, *verily thought with himſelf, that* he *ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jeſus*[b]: and yet how often

[a] John xvi. 2. [b] Acts xxvi. 9.

often did he afterwards condemn himſelf as a ſinner, for doing this very thing? becauſe indeed he had done wickedly, in perſecuting the truth, in perſecuting the church of God, when he might have been better informed. The like may be ſaid, when men ſincerely deny and oppoſe the important truths of the goſpel, and by their hereſies give great diſturbance, and do infinite miſchief to God's church. Their being verily perſuaded that truth is on their ſide, or that they are doing right, if it may be ſomewhat of excuſe as a mitigating circumſtance, yet is no juſtification of their conduct, before God, or man. They are impugners of divine truths, notwithſtanding, and ſubverters of ſouls; and therefore condemned by God, and liable to all ſuch cenſures from man, as ſcripture ordains in caſe of hereſy. So then, ſincerity, in the firſt ſenſe of the word, as oppoſed to guile, or hypocriſy, is of no avail in this matter. It changes not the nature of things, nor the rules of conduct: we are as much obliged to admoniſh, to avoid, to reject a man that thus ſincerely corrupts the faith, and ſeduces common chriſtians, as the man that does it in guile, and againſt his own conſcience: becauſe indeed, though the iniquity may not be altogether ſo great, yet iniquity it is; and becauſe the miſchief, either way, is the ſame, and it is our bounden duty to guard againſt it. I muſt further add, that ſcripture mentions a caſe of God's ſending upon men ſtrong deluſion, in the way of judicial

judicial infatuation, *that they ſhould believe a lie*[a], *and that they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* Now, by the rule of ſincerity (in this firſt ſenſe) even ſuch abandoned creatures as the apoſtle there ſpeaks of, might plead not guilty, as teaching nothing but what they really believe, nothing which they condemn themſelves for, or conceive to be falſe. They teach and propagate lies, but they believe them to be true all the while. There is no uncharitableneſs in judging[b], that all who propagate deiſm and infidelity in a chriſtian country, (renouncing their baptiſm) are under judicial blindneſs, if they really believe the lies which they are ſo induſtrious to ſpread: and their pretended ſincerity, in that caſe, is no alleviation of their crime, but the worſt ſymptom of it. Therefore ſincerity in this ſenſe, as ſignifying only believing what one teaches, can ſcarce amount to a tolerable plea, by itſelf, ſince it is what may be found in men of a ſeared conſcience, and a reprobate mind.

2. Let us next conſider the ſecond ſenſe of ſincerity, as oppoſed to prejudice and partiality, and ſee whether, and how far that alters the caſe, more than the other. But here a difficulty occurs at the firſt mention of it; how will it be proved? I do not ſay merely to other men,

[a] 2 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12.

[b] John iii. 19. 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Hebr. x. 26–31. 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22.

men, but how will it be proved to a man's ſelf? if a man pleads his ſincerity in this caſe, he ought to know that he has it, or he does but trifle with himſelf and others. He is to prove that he has no prepoſſeſſion, no bias, no leaning to a ſide: he is to prove that he has uſed all due diligence in looking out for evidence; that neither haſte, nor ſloth, nor impatience has hindered: he is to prove, that he has uſed all proper care and exactneſs in comparing and balancing the reaſons and arguments on both ſides: in ſhort, he is to prove, that he has neither deſignedly, nor careleſsly left out any thing in the account, nor at length made a concluſion upon any other view, or motive, but that reaſon and truth ſo required: for, ſubmitting to reaſon, without any bias, that is ſincerity. When he has proved this, he has proved himſelf ſincere, and then he is juſtified. But I humbly conceive, that the ſhorter and plainer way would be, to ſay, that he has examined the queſtion, weighed the reaſons, and thereupon finds, that his judgment is right and well grounded, and therefore he abides by it: for that is what the whole comes to; and ſo the proof of our ſincerity, in this ſecond ſenſe of the word, reſolves at length into the merits of the main cauſe. He that has reaſon on his ſide, (I except the caſe of unavoidable incapacity) he is the ſincere man; for if any perſon jumps to concluſion without premiſes, or lays more weight upon them than his reaſon will ſupport; it is plain that there is ſomething beſides

reaſon,

reaſon; which ſways him, and which determines him. Be it warmth of temper, be it wearineſs and impatience, be it partial fondneſs for novelty, be it what it will; if it is not reaſon, it is prejudice and partiality; (I except againſt unavoidable incapacity) and the man is not ſincere in the ſtrict ſenſe; which yet is the only ſenſe that can be at all to the purpoſe. One might ſay then to ſuch a perſon who pleads his ſincerity, prove it, and we admit of it: ſincerity without reaſons to prove it, is a dead ſincerity. And we may here apply what St. James ſays in another caſe, with a very little change: ſhew me thy ſincerity without thy reaſons, and I will ſhew thee my ſincerity by my reaſons. He that proves his point, beſt proves his ſincerity. There is no other way for it, unleſs a man will plead ignorance, or incapacity; and then why is he confident? the ſum therefore of all is, that the queſtion about ſincerity reſolves at length into the main queſtion in debate, and is to be decided by it. There might ſeem at firſt hearing, to be ſomething in the plea of ſincerity; and indeed, taking it in the firſt ſenſe, it might be certainly known, to a man's ſelf, if it could be of any ſervice to him in the cauſe: but it is a point acknowledged on all hands, that a man's being thus ſincerely a ſinner, does not make him a ſaint. As to ſincerity in the latter ſenſe, that would be of ſervice to us, if it could be proved[a]; but

[a] See Rogers's diſcourſe of the inviſible church, p. 22, 23. edit. 3d. Rogers's Review, p. 109.

but to prove it, is the ſame as to prove that truth and reaſon are on our ſide, that we are clear in the matter, and go upon ſure grounds. So then, the pleading ſincerity, in the preſent caſe, is only fetching a compaſs, to come round about again to the place where we ſet out. For all turns at laſt upon this; who has the beſt reaſon to ſupport his perſuaſion? if they who oppoſe the doctrine of the Trinity, teach falſe and pernicious doctrine, and it can be proved upon them, we are right in condemning them, and in refuſing communion with them. We have no occaſion to enquire into their ſincerity; which, in whatever ſenſe we take it, is an inſignificant plea, and ſuch as ought to be thrown out on both ſides, ſerving only for amuſement, diverting them from the buſineſs in hand.

It was upon theſe or the like conſiderations that I took occaſion to ſay formerly: "We have "nothing to do to inquire after your ſincerity, "of which God is judge: neither civil judica-"tures, nor eccleſiaſtical courts, ever proceed "upon that bottom. Our buſineſs is, not to "conſider the ſincerity of the men, but the "nature, quality, and tendency of the doctrine. "There have been ſincere Photinians, ſincere "Samoſatenians, ſincere Sabellians, ſincere Papiſts, "ſincere Jews and Mahometans. And indeed, "what ſects are there that have not ſincere "men among them[a]?" To which I may now

[a] Second defence, p. 7.

now briefly add, that all ſects have many who are ſincere in the firſt ſenſe of the word, and have ſome, probably, in the ſecond ſenſe alſo, but known to God only, who alone can judge how far their prejudices are inſuperable, or their ignorance unavoidable. I was willing to repeat here what I had aſſerted in another place, becauſe there is a gentleman to whom this plain doctrine has appeared not a little ſurprizing[a]. And thereupon he has been pleaſed to aſk, Is the doctor willing to be reſponſible, at laſt, for the nature, quality, and tendency of all his notions? to which I anſwer, willing or not willing, every man is reſponſible, at laſt, for the doctrines he teaches. And if they are falſe and pernicious (unleſs the error were unavoidable) they fall under the ſame condemnation with thoſe *idle words*, of which *account* muſt given at the *day of judgment*[b]. But that I alſo may aſk a queſtion in my turn, is that gentleman willing to be reſponſible at laſt, for his ſincerity, that is to ſay, for his impartiality in every view, free from all biaſſes or prejudices? or is he ſure that he has no culpable neglects, no precipitation of judgment to charge himſelf with? when he can be able to ſay, he knows he has not, I preſume I may as reaſonably ſay, I know what the nature, quality, and tendency of a doctrine is: and I conceive, this is a much

[a] Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 52.
[b] Matt. xii. 36.

much ſurer and ſafer rule to proceed by, than what he propoſes. A well grounded aſſurance muſt be had, either of our own ſtrict ſincerity and unprejudiced reaſon, or elſe of the truth and juſtice of what we eſpouſe. Now, I conceive, in the general, it is much eaſier to come at the latter, than at the former, nay and that the natural and regular proceſs is, to prove the former by the latter.

The gentleman aſks farther, is it impoſſible for him to be miſtaken in any of his inquiries into truth? I know, it is very poſſible for frail and fallible men to be miſtaken in what they ſay, though not in what they prove: and therefore one would take care to advance nothing as of moment to be believed, but upon clear and ſure grounds, ſuch as the reaſon of mankind ought to ſubmit to. But this I ſhall ſay more to, under another head. However, to return him a queſtion, as before: is it impoſſible for him to be miſtaken (or rather, is it not very natural and eaſy for him to miſtake) in judging of his ſincerity? I underſtand it in the ſenſe of impartiality, the only ſenſe pertinent to the cauſe in hand. It is further aſked; "may not ſome things which he has, or however "ſhall hereafter advance, differ, in ſome ſort from "the ideas in the divine mind?" here the terms, ſome things, ſhall hereafter, and in ſome ſort, are ſo obſcure and indefinite, that there is no returning a definitive anſwer, more than this; that what God has revealed concerning the

Trinity, is, no doubt, agreeable to the divine mind: and that is all we contend for, appealing to ſcripture for it. However, here again, I preſume, we can be at leaſt as ſure that our doctrine anſwers the ideas of the divine mind, as we can be that our ſincerity is ſuch as God ſees no flaws in. So the queſtion returns; which method may we beſt truſt to? which is the ſureſt and ſafeſt rule to judge by? by a man's knowing himſelf perfectly, or by his knowing the truth of things?

The author proceeds to tell us, that ſincerity is a proper thing to be inquired after in ſuch caſes, and that civil judicatures at leaſt do it, when any perſon is arraigned. But do they ever inquire whether the perſon arraigned might believe it lawful to ſteal in caſe of neceſſity, or might judge it his duty to affront the government, or to talk treaſon againſt the crown? if the plea of ſincerity were to be admitted in ſuch caſes, it would never fail to be pleaded: we ſhould then have new employment for juries, to ſit upon men's hearts; and the verdict, of courſe, would be brought in for the criminal, unleſs he were weak enough to confeſs malice prepenſe, and that he acted againſt conſcience. The law of the land, and the law of common ſenſe too, has taken a ſhorter, wiſer way, which is to preſume that when a man has done an ill thing, he either knew that it was evil, or elſe ought to have known it. Ignorantia juris non excuſat delictum, is, I think, the fundamental maxim they go upon. Every man

man is obliged to know his duty; and it is at his own peril, if he miſtakes the law he is to be judged by[d]. What room then is there for the plea of ſincerity? but the gentleman obſerves that the characters of ſuch as are impeached are often inquired into, and have great weight. Yes, in order to judge whether they are guilty of the fact, and how far it was deſigned and wilful. But, I believe, if it ſhould appear that the offender tranſgreſſed upon principle, and perſiſted in it, not ſenſible of any fault, but taking upon him to be wiſer than the laws, or the court, and to correct his judges, ſuch ſincerity ſo pleaded, would be ſo far from alleviating the crime, or mitigating the ſentence, that it would

[d] Mr. Bayle, in few words, well illuſtrates this article. "There is good reaſon for not excuſing an ignorance of right "at human tribunals: for though it may poſſibly happen that a "man is honeſtly and innocently ignorant of what the laws of "the land ordain; yet as the judges cannot diſcern whether "he ſpeaks ſincerely or no, they cannot take up with his ex-"cuſe, for fear of the diſorders which might happen upon it: "ſince a world of malefactors and diſturbers of the public peace "might make uſe of the ſame juſtification. Therefore to pre-"vent a general evil, they will make no exception to this "general rule, ignorantia juris non excuſat. This may poſſibly "be unjuſt and very hard upon particular perſons; but it is "neceſſary to ſacrifice ſomething to the good of ſociety.

"This is undoubtedly the reaſon why human tribunals "admit no excuſe upon an ignorance of right: but let us be-"ware imagining that God proceeds by the ſame reaſon: as "he is the ſearcher of hearts, he knows moſt aſſuredly, whe-"ther ſuch and ſuch perſon be under an invincible ignorance "of right; and if he be, abſolves him as freely as if the ig-"norance were only of fact." Bayle Supplem. to Philoſoph. Comment. p. 589, 590. Compare Rogers's Review, &c. p. 104.

would do juſt the reverſe: and the court would be obliged to judge according to the nature and quality and tendency of the fact committed, and not by the miſtaken ſentiments of the perſon arraigned. I return therefore to what I before ſaid, that in the queſtion which concerns our behaviour towards the impugners of the chriſtian faith, we have nothing to do to conſider the ſincerity of the men, but the quality of their doctrine. As to the reſt, God is judge: and he will make all reaſonable and merciful allowances for unavoidable failings.

But is it not hard and ſevere cenſure (may ſome ſay) to condemn thoſe ſincere men who mean as honeſtly as we can do, and to make their guilt the ground of renouncing communion with them[e]? I anſwer: this is not a fair repreſentation. That they are as ſincere as we are in one ſenſe, as believing what they teach, we admit, and it is nothing to the purpoſe: that they are ſincere, as it ſignifies impartial, is the point to be tried; and it depends upon the iſſue of the main cauſe. In the mean while, we make not their guilt the formal cauſe of condemning them, but their corrupt doctrine, which indeed generally carries guilt with it, but more or leſs according to the circumſtances and capacities of the perſons. Therefore we ſay not how deep their guilt is: of that God is judge. But this we ſay, that we ſhould ourſelves be guilty in

[e] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 14, 23, 39, 40, 42, 44, 47.

in a very high degree, if we either taught ſuch doctrines, or did not fully and plainly condemn them, refuſing communion with ſuch as openly and reſolutely eſpouſe them. What we do in this caſe, is not ſo properly damning others, not paſſing any peremptory judgment of their final eſtate (to their own maſter they ſtand or fall) but it is conſcientiouſly diſcharging a weighty truſt, cautiouſly providing, firſt, for our own ſalvation, and next for the ſalvation alſo of as many as we have any concern with. If our adverſaries be honeſt and conſcientious, ſo much the better for them, and we heartily wiſh they may be found ſuch before the high tribunal. We approve of what Salvian very mildly and tenderly ſays, in reſpect to this very caſe, ſo far as concerns all that conſcientiouſly, and in the integrity of their hearts differ from us: "They are heretics, but do not know that they "are ſo. They are heretics in our judg-"ment, not ſo in their own: for they eſteem "themſelves ſuch good catholics, that they "even throw upon us the infamous charge "of hereſy. Such therefore as they are to us, "we are to them. We know aſſuredly that "they are injurious to the divine generation "of the Son, in making him inferior to the "Father: they, on the other hand, think us "injurious to the Father in believing them "both equal. Truth is on our ſide; but they "preſume it is on theirs. We in reality ho-"nour God; but they think, their opinion

" does him moſt honour. They are indeed un-
" dutiful to God, but this they eſteem a great
" duty of religion. They are impious, but they
" believe it true piety. They err therefore, but
" they err with an honeſt mind: not out of hatred
" to God, but with affection to him, believing that
" they both love and honour the Lord. Though
" they have not the right faith, yet they think
" they have a perfect love of God. How they
" ſhall be puniſhed, at the day of judgment,
" for this their error of a falſe perſuaſion, no
" one can know except the judge[f]." Thus far we can go in our charity towards them: but our charitable diſpoſitions towards their perſons, ought never to bribe us to think favourably of their principles, or move us to deſert the proper defence of goſpel truths, or hinder us from declaring that the corrupting the faith of Chriſt, is in its own nature a wicked thing, is deteſtable practice.

It will not be improper here to make mention of a noted and uſeful diſtinction of ſin, or wickedneſs, into material, and formal; one conceived to go along with the matter of the tranſgreſſion conſidered in the abſtract, the other conceived to make the perſon formally a tranſgreſſor, and a wicked man. I dare not ſay, that every one who openly maintains the worſt part of popery, or judaiſm, or mahometiſm, is formally a wicked man: I know not how far, invincible

[f] Salvian. de Gubernat. Dei, L. v. p. 87. ed. Brem.

vincible ignorance, or unavoidable incapacity, or unconquerable prejudices (owing, ſuppoſe, to education, or to a degree of enthuſiaſm, or particular circumſtances) may be pleadable in his favour. But ſtill, after all the moſt candid allowances that can be made, I ſhould not ſcruple to cenſure his opinions as wicked, (materially conſidered) his doctrines impious, and his attempts to propagate them, vile and execrable. They are truly ſo in the nature of the thing, abſtracted from the circumſtances of the perſon: and to a man that has the full and free uſe of his faculties, and opportunities ſuitable, they are crimes of the firſt magnitude, and ought to be cenſured as ſuch. The gentlemen with whom I am now debating this point, will not ſcruple to declare as much, with reſpect to the doctrine of perſecution, and they are very ſevere againſt St. Paul[g] for practiſing upon it, though he was, in one ſenſe, perfectly ſincere, honeſt, and pious[h] (ſo far as concerned his then preſent ſentiments) in what he did. He went upon the doctrine of the Old Teſtament, in relation to falſe prophets, and blaſphemers, was right in his general principle, but wrong in the application. He acted not out of envy, malice, or other ſecular motives, like the Jews who crucified Chriſt; a new caſe happened which he

[g] Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 35, &c. Reply to P. C's. Letter, p. 40, &c.

[h] P. C's. Letter to the author of the Vindication, p. 38, &c. Rogers's viſible and inviſible church, p. 24, 25.

he had not conſidered, ſo well as he might: he was ſo over officious to do his preſumed duty, that he ſtaid not to examine ſtrictly whether it was duty or no; ſo eager and impatient to ſerve God, in his way, that he conſidered not, whether it was really ſerving him, or the contrary. This appears to have been his caſe, and a pitiable caſe it was. I queſtion whether the corrupters of the chriſtian faith, many of them, could claim for themſelves ſo fair an apology. Yet St. Paul was to blame, becauſe the thing was evil in itſelf, and by the uſe of due care, he might have known it. The ſame I ſay of ſincere teachers of bad doctrines: the thing is evil in itſelf, and, generally ſpeaking, they may, by a right uſe of their faculties, know that it is ſo. But whether they may, or may not, it concerns us not to inquire: it is enough for us, that their doctrine is falſe and dangerous, tending to ſubvert the goſpel of Chriſt.

IV. But it will be further objected, that we all along take for granted that our doctrines are true, and theirs falſe: and why are we ſo confident in this matter, unleſs we think ourſelves infallible? The author of Sober and charitable diſquiſition, is pleaſed to intimate, that though we will not own ourſelves infallible, yet in fact we avow it[i]. He endeavours to prove the charge thus, "In the point in which you are cer-" tain, you are infallible, and wherein you pre-" tend

[i] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 37.

" tend to be certain, you do equally pretend to " infallibility: for certainty is, cui non poteſt " ſubeſſe falſum. You muſt have evidence for " a point in which you pretend to be certain, " not only to put the matter out of doubt, but " enough to aſſure you a miſtake is impoſſible. " I am infallibly certain two and two are four— " it muſt be; and cannot be otherwiſe; without " ſuch evidence there is no certainty: and where " error is impoſſible, there is infallibility[j]. Nor " can I ſee that any thing ſhort of downright " infallibility can juſtify the behaviour (of the " trinitarians) if that can. But to diſclaim in- " fallibility in words, and claim it in fact, is " too common a practice, though no very com- " mendable one[k]. It is queſtionable whether " either ſide have ſuch evidence as will juſtify " them in thinking a miſtake impoſſible; with- " out which there is no proper certainty; and " if there be not, there is room for mutual charity " and forbearance[l]."

I do not think it kind or fair in this inſtance, to bring in the word infallibility, where it has plainly nothing to do, only to throw an invidious reflection upon ſome perſons who are far from deſerving it: that is not a ſober, or a charitable, method of debate. The ſum of his argument, when the colours are taken off, is no more than this; that if we have not demonſtration, as clear as in mathematics, or metaphyſics, on

[j] Ibid. p. 37. [k] P. 39. [l] P. 38.

on our ſide of the queſtion, we ought not to inſiſt upon it ſo far as to make it a term of communion. Now, ſuppoſe we ſhould ſay we have, (though we ſay no ſuch thing) yet would that be what the world has been uſed to call, claiming infallibility, or pretending to be infallible? would it not be very wrong to ſay that a man pretends to be infallible, only becauſe he is very certain that the propoſitions in Euclid are infallibly true? ſuch an unmanly playing with words is unbecoming in any cauſe, much more in this. The infallibility of ſcience, reſting upon the nature of things and the ſuppoſed truth of our rational faculties, is quite another thing from perſonal infallibility ſuppoſed to be an extraordinary gift from heaven, to a pope, or a council, or to a church at large. Things ſo diſtinct, ought not to have been confounded. Whatever certainty we pretend to, we reſt it intirely upon the proofs we produce, for the world to judge of, and not upon any perſonal endowments. How foreign therefore, and beſide the mark, muſt it appear, to ſpeak of our pretending to be infallible? indeed, the papiſts have a hundred times told us, that we can have no proper certainty without infallibility: and if that were true, there's an end of the reformation at once. The ground and baſis upon which the proteſtant name ſtands, and without which it would ſink inſtantly, is, that there may be a proper certainty in matters of faith, doctrine, and diſcipline, without infallibility. They that endeavour to ſap this

true

true principle, undermine the foundation upon which we reſt, and betray the cleareſt and beſt cauſe in the world, to papiſts on one hand, and to ſceptics on the other. I take this matter to be of exceeding great moment, and therefore ſhall not ſcruple the pains of conſidering it at large. I ſhall firſt repreſent the anſwers which have been given to the objection, (as urged by papiſts) in the words of our judicious Chillingworth: and I ſhall next conſider what anſwer may be proper to give to the ſame objection, in the main, as dreſſed up anew by adverſaries from another quarter.

1. Mr. Chillingworth writes thus: "Though "we pretend not to certain means of not err-"ing in interpreting all ſcripture, particularly "ſuch places as are obſcure and ambiguous, yet "this methinks ſhould be no impediment but "that we may have certain means of not erring "in and about the ſenſe of thoſe places which "are ſo plain and clear that they need no in-"terpreters: and in ſuch we ſay, our faith is "contained. If you aſk me, how I can be ſure "that I know the true meaning of theſe places? "I aſk you again, can you be ſure that you "underſtand what I, or any man elſe ſays?— "God be thanked that we have ſufficient means "to be certain enough of the truth of our "faith: but the privilege of not being in "poſſibility of erring, that we challenge not, "becauſe we have as little reaſon as you, to "do ſo; and you have none at all. If you

"aſk,

" aſk, ſeeing we may poſſibly err, how can we " be aſſured, we do not? I aſk you again, ſeeing " your eye ſight may deceive you, how can you " be ſure you ſee the ſun when you do ſee it[m]? " a pretty ſophiſm! that whoſoever poſſibly may " err, cannot be certain that he doth not err. " A judge may poſſibly err in judgment, can he " therefore never have aſſurance that he hath " judged right? a traveller may poſſibly miſtake " his way, muſt I therefore be doubtful whether " I am in the right way from my hall to my " chamber? or can our London carrier have no " certainty, in the middle of the day, when " he is ſober and in his wits, that he is in the " way to London? theſe, you ſee, are right " worthy conſequences, and yet they are like " to your own, as an egg to an egg, or milk " to milk[n].

" Methinks, ſo ſubtle a man as you are, " ſhould eaſily apprehend a wide difference be- " tween authority to do a thing, and infalli- " bility in doing it: and again, between a con- " ditional infallibility, and an abſolute. The " former, the doctor, together with the article " of the church of England, attributeth to the " church, nay, to particular churches, and I " ſubſcribe to his opinion: that is, an autho- " rity of determining controverſies of faith, " according to plain and evident ſcripture and " univerſal tradition, and infallibility while they " proceed according to this rule. As if there " ſhould

[m] Chillingworth, p. 99, 100.

[n] P. 104, 105.

" ſhould ariſe an heretique that ſhould call in " queſtion Chriſt's paſſion and reſurrection, the " church had authority to decide this contro- " verſy, and infallible direction how to do it, " and to excommunicate this man, if he ſhould " perſiſt in his error[a].

" The ground of your error here is, your not " diſtinguiſhing between actual certainty, and " abſolute infallibility. Geometricians are not " infallible in their own ſcience; yet they are " very certain of theſe things which they ſee de- " monſtrated: and carpenters are not infallible, " yet certain of the ſtreightneſs of thoſe things " which agree with their rule and ſquare. So " though the church be not infallibly certain that " in all her definitions, whereof ſome are about " diſputable and ambiguous matters, ſhe ſhall " proceed according to her rule; yet being cer- " tain of the infallibility of her rule, and that " in this or that thing ſhe doth manifeſtly pro- " ceed according to it; ſhe may be certain of " the truth of ſome particular decrees, and yet " not certain that ſhe ſhall never decree but " what is true[b].

" Though the church being not infallible, " I cannot believe her in every thing ſhe ſays, " yet I can and muſt believe her in every thing " ſhe proves, either by ſcripture, reaſon, or uni- " verſal tradition, be it fundamental, or be it " not fundamental.—Though ſhe may err in " ſome things, yet ſhe does not err in what " ſhe proves, though it be not fundamental[c].

" Proteſtants

[a] P. 105. [b] P. 125. [c] P. 133, 134.

" Proteſtants believing ſcripture to be the word " of God, may be certain enough of the truth " and certainty of it. For what if they ſay " the catholic church, much more themſelves, " may poſſibly err in ſome fundamental points, " is it therefore conſequent, they can be certain " of none ſuch? What if a wiſer man than I " may miſtake the ſenſe of ſome obſcure place " of Ariſtotle, may I not therefore, without " any arrogance or inconſequence, conceive my- " ſelf certain that I underſtand him in ſome " plain places which carry their ſenſe before " them?—We pretend not at all to any aſſu- " rance that we cannot err, but only to a ſuf- " ficient certainty that we do not err, but rightly " underſtand thoſe things that are plain, whe- " ther fundamental, or not fundamental. That " God is, and is a rewarder of them that ſeek " him: that, &c.—Theſe we conceive both true, " becauſe the ſcripture ſays ſo, and truths fun- " damental, becauſe they are neceſſary parts of " the goſpel, whereof our Saviour ſays, Qui non " crediderit damnabitur.

" I do heartily acknowledge and believe the " articles of our faith to be in themſelves " truths as certain and infallible as the very " common principles of geometry, or metaphy- " ſics: but that there is required of us a know- " ledge of them and an adherence to them, as " certain as that of ſenſe or ſcience; that ſuch " a certainty is required of us under pain of " damnation, ſo that no man can hope to be

in

" in a ſtate of ſalvation, but he that finds in " himſelf ſuch a degree of faith, ſuch a ſtrength " of adherence; this I have already demonſtrated " to be a great error, and of dangerous and " pernicious conſequence[a].

" Though I deny that it is required of us " to be certain in the higheſt degree, infallibly " certain, of the truth of the things which " we believe (for this were to know and not be- " lieve, neither is it poſſible unleſs our evidence " of it, be it natural or ſupernatural, were of " the higheſt degree) yet I deny not, but we " ought to be and may be infallibly certain that " we are to believe the religion of Chriſt. For, " 1. This is moſt certain, that we are in all " things to do according to wiſdom and rea- " ſon, rather than againſt it. 2. This is as " certain, that wiſdom and reaſon require, that " we ſhould believe thoſe things which are by " many degrees more credible and probable than " the contrary. 3. This is as certain, that " to every man who conſiders impartially what " great things may be ſaid for the truth of Chriſ- " tianity, and what poor things they are which " may be ſaid againſt it, either for any other re- " ligion, or for none at all, it cannot but appear " many degrees more credible, that the chriſtian " religion is true, than the contrary. And from " all theſe premiſes, this concluſion evidently " follows,

[a] P. 140, 141.—290.

" follows, that it is infallibly certain, that we are " firmly to believe the truth of the chriſtian re- " ligion.—There is an abundance of arguments " exceedingly credible, inducing men to believe " the truth of chriſtianity: I ſay, ſo credible, " that though they cannot make us evidently ſee " what we believe, yet they evidently convince, " that in true wiſdom and prudence, the articles " of it deſerve credit, and ought to be accepted " as things revealed by God [b]."

I have laid theſe ſeveral paſſages together, drawn out of this excellent writer: by which it may appear what kind of certainty is profeſſed by proteſtants, and how much the proteſtant cauſe depends upon that ſingle article. The ſum is, that though we have not ſtrict mathematical demonſtration for matters of belief, ſo as to make faith and ſcience the ſame thing, yet we have ſuch a certainty as leaves no reaſonable room for doubt, ſuch as is ſufficient to build ſaving faith upon, and as much authority alſo as is neceſſary to ſupport it. And thus we get clear of popiſh ſubtlety and ſophiſtry, ſhewing that there is a medium, namely, moral certainty, between ſcepticiſm on one hand, and papal infallibility on the other.

2. No

[b] Chillingworth, p. 295. alias p. 254. Compare Stillingfleet's Rational Account. P. I. Chap. vi. 178, &c. 187, &c. 196. Chap. vii. 205, &c. Compare alſo Mr. Cumming, who has very fully and ſolidly treated this argument. Diſſertat. on Scripture Conſequences, p. 61.—76. Conſiderations, &c. p. 315.—321.

2. No ſooner are we thus relieved on that hand, but preſently we are attacked from another quarter, and with the ſame artillery as before, only a little differently managed, as it is now to ſerve different purpoſes. For here again it is alledged, that without either infallibility, or demonſtration, we can have no proper certainty, nor any juſt authority to declare matters of faith, or to inſiſt upon them as terms of communion: and the concluſion here aimed at, or what muſt naturally follow, is, to ſit looſe to every thing, unconcerned for the faith of Chriſt, cold and indifferent towards the great truths of the goſpel. Deiſts here, and papiſts there combine together, to oppoſe the truth, and both extremes meet in one. But let us examine how our new adverſaries manage. Their whole ſtrength lies in one ſingle dilemma, thus: "either you "have certainty, or you have not: if you pre-"tend to certainty, that is claiming infallibility; "if you renounce certainty, you have no au-"thority to determine faith, or preſcribe terms "of communion." We anſwer, by diſtinguiſhing the kinds and degrees of certainty, and therefore do ſay, that though we claim not infallibility, yet we do claim certainty ſufficient to guard againſt ſcepticiſm or hereſy, and to maintain juſt authority.

The author of the *Sober and charitable diſquiſition*, intimates, as before ſaid, that we diſclaim infallibility in words, but in fact avow it. The ſame thing has been ſaid by a multitude

of other writers: I ſhall cite one only for a ſample, becauſe he has urged it as ingeniouſly and ſarcaſtically as a man could well do, in a dedication to the pope. "Your holineſs is "not perhaps aware, how near the churches of "us proteſtants have at length come to thoſe "privileges and perfections which you boaſt of "as peculiar to your own.—You cannot err in "any thing you determine, and we never do: "that is, in other words, you are infallible, and "we always in the right[c]." It may hereupon be obſerved, how this witty gentleman takes upon him to ridicule a very neceſſary diſtinction, between an aſſurance that we cannot err, and a ſufficient certainty that we do not err: a diſtinction, which the judicious Chillingworth laid all imaginable ſtreſs upon, perceiving that the whole proteſtant cauſe depended upon it. For if we cannot have ſufficient certainty that in ſeveral things, relating to faith and worſhip, we do not err, how do we juſtify our ſeparation from the church of Rome? if we are not certain that therein we do not err, then neither are we certain that ſhe has erred, and that there was a juſt cauſe for leaving her: but all muſt reſolve into humour, fancy, fickleneſs, and unſupported perſuaſion. It was this very principle of a ſufficient certainty, that we do not err in what we prove, which reſcued us from the tyranny of thoſe who pretend that they cannot err in whatever they define. The difference between

[c] Steel's dedication to the Pope, p. 2.

between thoſe two is ſo great, and ſo palpable, that one would think it muſt argue either very ſlow faculties, or a perverſe temper of mind, for any perſon to confound them. However, to give a more diſtinct idea of the two caſes, I ſhall endeavour to repreſent the difference to the eye in one view, in two oppoſite columns, correſponding to each other.

Popiſh infallibility.	*Proteſtant certainty.*
1. The church ſimply infallible in what ſhe defines.	1. The church morally certain in what ſhe proves.
2. The church ſays ſo, is the laſt reſort, and deciſive.	2. Not becauſe the church ſays it, but becauſe ſcripture and reaſon, by her mouth declare it.
3. Submit to authority in all inſtances whatever: for authority here ſtands for proof.	3. Submit to authority in ſuch inſtances only where you ſee no good reaſon to the contrary; for then it is reaſonable ſo to do.
4. Abſolute implicit faith in man.	4. Abſolute implicit faith in God only.
5. Examination ſuperfluous, and dangerous: prove nothing, ſwallow every thing.	5. Examination allowed and approved: prove all things, hold faſt that which is good.

Popiſh infallibility.	*Proteſtant certainty.*
6. The ſubject obeys the interpreter at all adventures, and ſubmits as to an infallible verity.	6. The ſubject obeys his own reaſon in ſubmitting to what is proved, and what the reaſon of mankind ought not to reject.
7. Be a thing ever ſo unreaſonable, or plainly falſe (tranſubſtantiation for inſtance) it muſt be received as divine, though a human deciſion.	7. Nothing ordered to be received, but upon the foot of reaſon and ſcripture, with great tenderneſs to private judgment: only taking for granted, that our faculties are true, and may in things plainly proved, be depended upon.

From this ſummary view, it may ſufficiently appear, that there is a very wide difference between the pretended papal infallibility, and proteſtant certainty: and that as the one is contrived to introduce and perpetuate all imaginable errors, ſo the other is undoubtedly the ſureſt way to exclude all pernicious errors, at leaſt, and to preſerve the moſt weighty truths.

The ground of what I call proteſtant certainty, is moral evidence: which though it comes not up to infallibility, or to the evidence of demonſtration, yet is certain enough for all the purpoſes of faith, or of a competent authority to maintain true doctrine. "Our church," (as a judicious

judicious writer ſays) "no where makes infal-
"lible certainty of aſſent a neceſſary condition of
"faith, it being ſufficient to make faith certain,
"if our rule be infallible, and that applied with
"moral evidence[d]."

Moral evidence, for the moſt part, governs the great affairs of the world, while rigid demonſtration ſerves rather for the entertainment of contemplative men, than for the uſes of common life. And ſince God has ſo ordered both our religious and ſecular affairs, as to lay us under a neceſſity of ſubmitting, in moſt caſes, to moral evidence, he has thereby bound it upon us as a duty; ſo that if we have not ſtrict demonſtration for what we believe, yet it is demonſtration that our evidence is ſuch as muſt command our aſſent, under pain of incurring the divine diſpleaſure. As to the nature, and quality, and force of moral evidence, in general, I refer the reader, for ſatisfaction, to an excellent writer, who has diſtinctly and fully conſidered it[e]. I ſhall content myſelf with making only a few occaſional obſervations.

It ſeems to me a prejudice done to religion, that the learned and philoſophical ſenſe of the words probable and certain, (ſo different from the common vulgar ſenſe of both) has been ſo often made uſe of by divines. When a common chriſtian hears it ſaid, that it is only probable, not abſolutely certain, that Chriſt lived or died;

[d] Puller's Moderation of the church of England, p. 142.
[e] Ditton on the Reſurrection of Chriſt, Part II. p. 93, &c.

died; or that the chriſtian religion is true, or the like; how muſt it aſtoniſh him, or afflict him? In the vulgar uſe of the words probable and certain, it is a ſhocking thought; though in the ſcholaſtic ſenſe, all may be right, as there is no rigid or ſcientifical demonſtration of any matter of fact, or of any article of pure faith: and every thing ſhort of that the ſchools are pleaſed to call probable only, not certain. If we were to hear any one, in ordinary converſation, ſay, that it is probable, not certain, that there is ſuch a city as Rome, Paris, or Conſtantinople, would not the man be thought mad? or if he were to ſay further, that it is probable only, not certain, that there was once ſuch a prince as Alexander, or Julius Cæſar, or William the Conqueror, or Henry the Eighth, ſhould we take him to be right in his wits? And yet it is in ſuch a ſenſe only, that divines mean it, when they ſay, that the chriſtian religion is probably, not certainly true; underſtanding at the ſame time, that it as certain as any antient fact can be, fully, perfectly, indiſputably certain, according to what the world generally means by certain. I ſhould think therefore, it were better to leave off the ſcholaſtic way (which muſt needs give offence, and which few underſtand) and to adapt our phraſes to the common acceptation, as alſo to ſcripture language. Look the ſcripture through for the meaning of the word certain and certainty, and you will find that it ſtands for certainty of facts,

which

which is proper certainty, when properly proved: and it is but ſinking the idea, and confounding common hearers or readers, to diſcredit it with the low name of probable and probability; which, in common ſpeech, ſcarce riſe higher than doubtful. I choſe to mention this the rather, becauſe I find that infidels have taken advantage of thoſe expreſſions, to run down Chriſtianity as not certain, but barely probable[f]. And how that muſt ſound to a common Engliſh reader, let any man judge.

I would obſerve farther, that the like miſchiefs may ſometimes follow from an improper uſe of the word believe. Were any one to ſay, he believes there is ſuch a country as France, or ſuch a perſon as the Pope of Rome, he would preſently be aſked, why? can he doubt of it? that expreſſion of believing commonly carries in it an idea of doubtfulneſs, and is uſed to denote a diffident aſſent. But when we would expreſs any fact of which we have no doubt, we ſay we know it, or are certain of it. So here again there appears to be a difference between the language of the literati, and common ſpeech, while the ſame ideas are not affixed to the ſame words, here and there. However, this latter caſe will not be apt to breed ſo much confuſion as the former, though it may create ſome: which might perhaps be prevented by the addition of an adverb,

[f] See Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, Chap. xii. p. 184.

verb, when we are ſpeaking of matters of faith, ſaying we aſſuredly believe, or undoubtedly believe thus and thus.

Now to return to the author of *Sober and charitable diſquiſition*[g]. He objects to us, that we have not a proper certainty of what we believe, like as we have of what we know, as that two and two are four. It is granted we have not. Belief is not ſtrictly ſcience, nor faith viſion: what then? in his ſenſe of proper certainty, there is no certainty that the ſun ſhines when we ſee it, nor that fire warms when we feel it, nor that there is any ſuch thing as the ſun in the firmament, nor indeed any material world: for, I apprehend, philoſophers are agreed, that there is no ſtrict demonſtration of theſe things[h]. Have theſe things therefore no proper certainty? Yes, they have, and ſuch as ordinarily make ſtronger impreſſions than abſtract reaſonings, or ideal ſpeculations, and are more out of the reach of all doubt to the bulk of mankind. So ſay I likewiſe of matters of faith; they have a proper certainty, ſuch as things of that kind admit of, ſuch as is fitted to common capacities, ſuch as the world is governed by, ſuch as paſſes for undoubted certainty in common language and common eſtimation, ſuch as God has ordained for uſe, and has obliged us to follow, and ſuch as both our preſent intereſts,

[g] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 37.
[h] See Clarke's Notes upon Rohault, Part 1. C. 2.
[i] Sober and charitable diſquiſition, p. 38.

intereſts, and our eternal happineſs are made to depend upon. So much for the certainty of matters of faith, conſidered in the general.

As to the particular point now before us, the certainty of it ſtands thus: we are morally and indubitably certain of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. And though we preſume not to ſay, or to think, that we may not, or cannot miſconſtrue ſcripture, yet we have many ſtrong reaſons to perſuade us that in this inſtance we do not: and therefore it is infallibly certain, (as Mr. Chillingworth well argues with reſpect to chriſtianity in general) that we ought firmly to believe it; becauſe wiſdom and reaſon require, that we ſhould believe thoſe things which are by many degrees more credible and probable than the contrary. Thus have we ſure and ſafe grounds to go upon[k]. And as we are in ſtrict duty bound to receive it as a revealed truth, ſo becauſe

[k] I may here obſerve ſomething of Mr. Bayle. In his Philoſophical Commentary, (Part 1. p. 337, &c.) After taking notice, that the romaniſts have perpetually reproached the proteſtants as deſtitute of any well grounded certainty, and that the proteſtants had anſwered the objection a thouſand times over; he adds, that it never was fully anſwered, never can be, in the common way, only it may be irreſiſtibly retorted upon papiſts; and the concluſion he at length reſts in, is, that God requires no more than a ſincere and diligent ſearch after truth. Mr. Bayle is ſo far right; but he forgot to tell us, how we may arrive at a well grounded certainty of that fact, that we have made a ſincere and diligent ſearch, without prejudice or bias, without any culpable ſloth and negligence in inquiring, or precipitancy in judging. There is no mathematical, or metaphyſical certainty as

becauſe it is a very important one, an article of the foundation, we are as ſtrictly bound to preſerve it, and earneſtly to contend for it: and becauſe one very proper means of preſerving it, as well as of keeping ourſelves pure, is to refuſe communion (according to the general direction of ſcripture in ſuch caſes) with thoſe that openly impugn it, therefore a neceſſity is laid upon us ſo to act, and woe is unto us, if we act otherwiſe. But we do not therefore ſay, as is unkindly inſinuated, that there is not room left for mutual charity: for we verily are perſuaded, yea, and aſſuredly know, that our ſo acting is charity both to the faithful and unfaithful, and towards all mankind; and that

as to this fact, which by him is made the main thing. Moral certainty is the utmoſt that any one can here pretend to, and that not ſo great as we can have of matters of faith; neither can our ſincerity be any way ſo certainly proved, as by the evidence we produce for the doctrines we maintain. Therefore Mr. Bayle commits a fallacy, or is guilty of great forgetfulneſs, in making a well grounded certainty of our ſincerity the laſt reſource, rather than the other; for generally ſpeaking, it is not ſo ſure or ſo firm a ground to reſt on, as the reaſons of things, or the merits of a cauſe. For, conſidering how obſcure the ſearch is into the inmoſt ſprings of action, or perſuaſion, which are very involved and intricate, how careleſs men are apt to be in the examination, and how liable alſo to be impoſed upon by ſelf flattery; I ſay, theſe things conſidered, it is much ſafer to rely upon the moral certainty appearing in things, than upon any pretended certainty we may conceive of our own ſincerity. I believe, the fallacy in this caſe has been chiefly owing to the equivocal meaning of the word ſincerity: for becauſe in one ſenſe, as oppoſed to hypocriſy, a man may eaſily know he is ſincere when he is ſo; it has been too haſtily concluded, that he may as eaſily know it in the other ſenſe of the word, as oppoſed to prejudice or partiality.

that the charging it as a breach of charity, is hard and uncharitable cenſure, is judging according to appearance only, not according to truth.

All depends upon this, that men take care, in every thing of moment, to go upon ſure grounds, to know what they do. That is the very thing which chiefly diſtinguiſhes reſolution from obſtinacy, orthodoxy from hereſy, wiſdom from raſhneſs, and righteouſneſs from iniquity. God has given us rational faculties to diſcern truth from error, and right from wrong: and we ought to be well aſſured, in whatſoever we teach, as of moment, that we have made that uſe of our faculties which we ought to have done, to diſcern between good and evil. It is not our perſuaſion that can juſtify us, there are many fond perſuaſions; and we are not commanded merely to obey our perſuaſions (though we ought not to go againſt them) but to obey the truth. It is not merely our ſincerity that can ſupport us, for of that we know nothing, in any juſt and proper ſenſe, but by the right and reaſon of the caſe; and we are not commanded to hold faſt our ſincere errors, but to hold faſt that which is good.

But what? will ſome aſk, do we then pretend to know that our doctrine is true? is faith advanced into knowledge? to this I anſwer, that we know, not ſcientifically, but with moral certainty, which is knowing according to the uſe of common ſpeech: and though we do not ſtrictly know what we merely believe, yet we know

know that we have ſuch moral evidence for what we believe, as binds us to the belief of it. In this ſenſe, we know what we do, and we have a well grounded aſſurance, that what we do is right, which is our juſtification. And this is what we ought always to have (I ſpeak more particularly of guides and teachers) in points of importance, and where it is not allowed to ſuſpend. Cannot we know, for inſtance, that a deiſt is raſh in rejecting all revealed religion? Yes, we know it as certainly, as that it would be raſh to deny, that there is any ſuch city as Rome, or Conſtantinople; or that there ever were ſuch men as Virgil, Horace, or Cicero. Cannot we know that a Jew is much in the wrong, to deny that the Meſſias is come? Yes we know it as aſſuredly, as that a man would be in the wrong to deny that the twelve Cæſars lived ſome centuries ago. Cannot we know that the popiſh doctrines of tranſubſtantiation, image worſhip, ſervice in an unknown tongue, and the like, are not primitive chriſtianity? Yea, we know it as evidently, as that modern Rome is not ancient Rome, or that London is not Canterbury. Cannot one know that the ſocinian interpretation of John i. 1. or of Hebr. i. 10. or of the texts relating to Chriſt's pre-exiſtence, is not the mind of ſcripture? yea, one may know it as certainly, as that a counter is not the king's coin, or that a monſter is not a man. I give theſe inſtances to ſhew, that it is not merely perſuaſion or ſincerity, that we have to plead for

for our faith, but certainty and well grounded aſſurance; ſuch as is judged ſufficient for wiſe and conſiderate men to go upon, and conduct themſelves by, in ſecular affairs of greateſt conſequence. We have no occaſion for infallibility, to ſupport us in ſuch a claim: common reaſon ſuffices, taking in the proper helps, and making the due uſe of them with humility and care, with ſobriety and godly fear*. Having gone through the moſt material objections I had met with, I may now proceed to the ſlighter and leſs conſiderable, but diſpatching them in fewer words.

V. It has been ſometimes invidiouſly ſuggeſted, that our zeal and conſtancy in contending ſo earneſtly for what we call faith, is bearing hard upon our chriſtian brethren of an oppoſite perſuaſion,

* But here again it may be aſked, may not a Jew, a deiſt, a papiſt, a ſocinian, or an arian, with equal confidence ſay that he knows he is in the right? he may ſo, and probably will. Yet truth and falſhood have a real diſtinction in nature, and depend not on fond conceits, or ſtrength of perſuaſion. If any man preſumes to ſay, he knows, when he does not know, he deceives himſelf, and is guilty before God; unleſs ſome unavoidable incapacity, or unconquerable prejudice, which God only is judge of, makes him innocent. And in that caſe it is not becauſe he delivers his real perſuaſion (for it may be impious as to the matter of it) nor becauſe it is well grounded, for he only thinks it is; but it is becauſe of his infirmity, which himſelf neither ſees nor knows, that God acquits him. How much any of us may ſtand in need of ſuch merciful allowances, we cannot ſay: but in the mean while, all we have to look to, or to truſt to, is to be as watchful and careful, that we go upon ſure grounds, as if no ſuch allowances might be made us. Such wary conduct is well enough underſtood and practiſed in temporal affairs, where any thing conſiderable is depending: the like we are to obſerve in ſpiritual.

ſuaſion, in afflicting and oppreſſing them, and in ſhort, in perſecution and popery. It can ſcarcely be conceived, that any ſenſible men ſhould ſeriouſly advance ſuch odd fancies, or that they mean any thing more by them, than rhetorication and flouriſh. Yet certain it is, that ſuch things have been offered with a ſerious air, and by men of no mean parts: I ſhall give ſome examples. One writes thus: "The humour of creed making, and creed impoſing, "is one of the moſt grievous inſtances of perſecution, and the grand ſource of every other "kind of it. If it be only their good opinion "of us, that our fellow chriſtians ſuſpend upon "our non aſſent to their confeſſions of faith, "they in a very inhuman and unchriſtian way, "perſecute us. It is in itſelf barbarous, ſays "Mr. Marvel, for theſe faith ſtretchers, whoſoever they be, to put mens conſciences upon "the torture, to rack them to the length of "their own notions[l]." This declamatory talk has been gravely, ſolidly and ſatisfactorily anſwered by a very good writer[m]: and yet the objector choſe rather to declaim again upon the ſame head, for ſeveral pages together[n], than to quit his falſe reaſonings, or acknowledge his miſtakes. To ſay the beſt of it, it is a very wanton way of talking in a ſubject

[l] Occaſional paper, Vol. ii. No. 1. p. 12, &c.

[m] Preface to the Weſtminſter confeſſion, p. 96—104.

[n] Defence of the ſcripture as the only ſtandard of faith, by the author of the occaſional paper, p. 35—40.

ſubject of the laſt importance, and is making a jeſt of the liberties of mankind here, and of their happineſs hereafter. If thoſe gentlemen have been ſo inhumanly and barbarouſly perſecuted, how is it that they have not yet aſſumed the title of martyrs, or confeſſors? for, perſecution and martyrdom are a kind of correlates, which ſuppoſe and imply each other. And what is that inhuman torture, that barbarous perſecution which they have endured? have they had trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, of bonds and impriſonments? have they wandered about in ſheep ſkins or goat ſkins, in dens, or caves of the earth, for the ſake of truth and godlineſs? No, but good chriſtians have ſuſpended their good opinion of them, that is the grievance. And for what? not for thinking as they pleaſe (for thoughts are free) but for overt acts of hereſy, or perhaps blaſphemy; for making public appeals to the people, in order to draw them off from liſtening to their better guides, to ſeduce them from the faith they have been baptized into, and to impoſe upon them ſuch doctrines as muſt endanger their everlaſting ſalvation. The kind and charitable endeavours of good men, whoſe province it is to prevent ſuch fatal miſchiefs, in the mildeſt and gentleſt way, ſuch as Chriſt himſelf has preſcribed. Theſe are the inhuman and unchriſtian perſecutions, which thoſe gentlemen complain of. But to be a little more particular, they muſt not take it amiſs to be told

in return to their odd complaint: 1. That they are guilty of a moſt intolerable abuſe of words and names, in ſpeaking of rack, torture and perſecution, where, even by their own account, there is not ſo much as a ſemblance of them: for it amounts after all, only to the ſuſpending our good opinion of them. 2. In this way of giving new and wrong names to things, they may, if they pleaſe, make the primitive churches alſo, and martyrs, yea, and Chriſt and his apoſtles, perſecutors: for they ſuſpended their good opinion of unbelievers. 3. The primitive diſcipline, by their account, will be moſt of it perſecution; and ſo inſtead of ten heathen perſecutions (as they are commonly reckoned) they may increaſe the number of perſecutions to five hundred or more, and call them chriſtian perſecutions, or rather unchriſtian ones, for that, it ſeems, is the name for them. 4. It is wrong in theſe gentlemen, to furniſh the papiſts with freſh topics for real perſecution. For ſince it will follow from this account, that perſecution is ſcripture doctrine, it may be pleaded, that papal perſecutions differ in kind only, or degree, from the other, but in the main, are warranted by the New Teſtament itſelf, and by the univerſal practice of the church in the beſt and pureſt ages. 5. This will likewiſe be furniſhing infidels with new arguments againſt chriſtianity, as it is a perſecuting religion: for it is certain, that the pretended perſecution here complained of, is ſuch as ſcripture itſelf preſcribes, as I have before proved.

6. But

6. But to come yet cloſer up to thoſe complainants, let it be conſidered, whether they are not themſelves the real perſecutors, guilty of that very crime which they charge upon the churches of God. To revile men for doing their bounden duty, to load them with reproaches for righteouſneſs ſake, to libel and defame them for maintaining the faith of Chriſt in a chriſtian way; to ſeduce their flocks from them, and to demand at the ſame time to be careſſed and honoured as fellow chriſtians: theſe are grievous impoſitions and oppreſſions, and may amount to a degree of perſecution, properly ſo called. They that refuſe to conform to order, who ſubmit not to ſound words and wholſome doctrine, who give unneceſſary diſturbance, and aſſume more than belongs to them; they are the invaders of liberty, the oppreſſors and perſecutors of religious and righteous men.

It will be ſaid perhaps, that creed makers and creed impoſers, as ſuch, aſſume more than belongs to them. But if that be a fault, it is a fault, common to all parties: for they who impugn the doctrines of the church, are themſelves as much creed makers, and creed impoſers, by their appeals to the people, and by their impoſing their own doctrines on the public, in a clamorous way, (and generally with ſatyr and invective upon all that diſlike them) as others are who impoſe their creeds in a more regular and authoritative manner. Much has been ſaid againſt creed making, by many who have as long creeds as others, only not

the ſame creeds, and who are as confident in dictating, and dogmatical in defining, and as eager to impoſe their own ſentiments, as it is poſſible for men to be. The queſtion, properly, is not, whether there ſhall be creeds or no; for all parties are for them, under one ſhape or other[a], and always will be: but the real matter in controverſy is, who ſhall have the drawing of them, or who ſhall impoſe them. And when men declaim againſt impoſing of creeds, the ſecret meaning of all ſeems to be, that they would not have ſuch a power or privilege lodged in any hands but their own. However, the fault lies not in impoſing creeds, (where there is a competent authority) but in impoſing falſe doctrine for true: and therefore the complaint is wide while it runs only in generals, againſt all creed making, and againſt impoſitions at large, eſpecially as practiſed in the proteſtant churches. We pretend not to impoſe articles of faith in an arbitrary manner, or to require any implicit belief in the church: we require no man to receive them for true, becauſe they are ours, but becauſe they carry their evidences along with them, and will bear examining.

But it will be ſaid, that the proteſtant churches however, do determine beforehand, that every perſon upon examination, ought to find thoſe things true which they have formed into creeds or articles. They do ſo, as to the main things, at leaſt, and where is the harm? It is no more than preſuming that there are ſome things ſo

[a] See Addenda, p. 502.

ſo certain, that the reaſon of mankind ought to ſubmit to them, and that thoſe things which they have defined, are of that number. To illuſtrate this matter farther, we may put a few caſes: let the propoſitions, ſuppoſe, of Euclid be given into any man's hand to examine, there will be no preſumption in telling him beforehand, that he will find them true: and if he afterwards ſays the contrary, it will be no breach of charity or of good manners, to tell him, that either he has not duly examined them, or is not ſincere in his report, or labours under an incapacity. Thus far will readily be allowed with reſpect to propoſitions of mathematical, or metaphyſical certainty: we may reaſonably determine beforehand, in ſuch inſtances, that they will be found true, upon a due examination, where capacity is not wanting. The like may be ſaid of an account, which has been carefully caſt up, and proved by the never failing rules of art: if any man comes after, and pretends to find an error in it, one may be aſſured beforehand, that the error is his own, and that he has been guilty of ſome neglect in the caſting it up. Apply this reaſoning to caſes of moral certainty: ſome of them are ſo plain, that a man may have as well grounded an aſſurance there, as any where. Let the queſtion be about the truth of Chriſtianity in general: a point ſo clear and ſo certain, that there is no uncharitableneſs in judging that the perſon who brings in a verdict againſt it, has never fully and

ſincerely examined, or labours under ſome unconquerable infirmity. The like may be affirmed with reſpect to many particular doctrines contained in our creeds or articles: there is ſuch a degree of moral evidence to atteſt them, that the reaſon of mankind ought to receive them. Now, the impoſing ſuch doctrines in thoſe whoſe province it properly is, is not aſſuming, but is diſcharging a weighty truſt: and this is quite another thing from the popiſh way of impoſing what they pleaſe, forbidding men to examine, or ſo much as to doubt of what they define; becauſe their church, they ſay, is infallible. Our way ſuppoſes that men ought to examine, (if capable) in order to know that the doctrine propoſed is true[b]: and we judge, with reaſon, that if they examine with care, and decide with impartiality, they cannot think otherwiſe of it. The foundations we go upon are, that reaſon is reaſon with every man; that human faculties are true; and that there is ſuch a thing as moral certainty, and that it is ground ſufficient for the governors of the church to reſt their own faith upon, and to hold out their light to others committed to their charge, and for whom they are ſo far reſponſible. Indeed, if the church governors ſhould happen to adminiſter poiſon, inſtead of wholeſome food, there will then be reaſon for complaint: but let not the complaint run againſt creed making, or creed impoſing in the general, (which is foreign and impertinent)

[b] See Addenda, p. 504.

impertinent) but let the particulars be ſpecified, wherein they have rigorouſly impoſed ſomething falſe, or at leaſt doubtful; and if the charge can be made good againſt them, they then ought with the ſame zeal to throw ſuch article out, as they keep the reſt in. Upon the whole, there is neither perſecution, nor popery, merely in impoſing creeds, &c. under pain of church cenſures, or excluſion from the miniſterial function: but there is good order and diſcipline in it, ſuch as Chriſt and his apoſtles have commanded, and the church in the beſt and pureſt ages has obſerved, and ſuch as is neceſſary to keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace.

VI. There is another objection near akin to the former, namely, that for church governors to direct men what to believe, and to exclude them from the chriſtian church, for impugning ſuch belief, is aſſuming a kind of dominion over the faith and conſciences of other perſons. To which I anſwer; men may call thoſe powers which Chriſt has left with his church, by what invidious names they pleaſe, but they cannot thereby alter the nature of things. That Chriſt has appointed his miniſters as guardians of the faith, and has impowered them to excommunicate the impugners of it, is a very plain caſe: and this is all that any proteſtant churches plead for. Whether it ſhould be called aſſuming dominion over the faith and conſciences of men, (ſince it is aſſuming no more than Chriſt has commanded) let the objectors conſider. The objection is worded in ambi-

guous terms, which carry no certain or determinate ideas: the very phraſe of *having dominion* over ones *faith*, though a ſcripture phraſe, is of obſcure meaning[c]; and 'tis hard to know whether St. Paul, who has uſed the phraſe[d], diſclaimed all ſuch dominion, or only declined the uſe of it in ſome circumſtances. If it means, preſcribing to others arbitrarily for ones own pleaſure or advantage, not purſuant to Chriſt's directions (as ſome interpret[e]) then St. Paul diſclaimed it abſolutely: but if it means only the exerciſe of the power of excommunication, ſuch as St. Paul did exerciſe over Hymenæus and Alexander (for ſo others interpret[f]) then St. Paul only declined the uſe of it in ſome particular circumſtances. Whatever the phraſe means, this is certain, that the proteſtant churches claim no more than a directive, or inſtructive power over men's faith or conſciences. Church cenſure and diſcipline affect only the overt acts[g], the ſpeaking,

[c] See Addenda, p. 505.
[d] 2 Cor. i. 24.
[e] See Grotius and Hammond.
[f] See Whitby and Wells.
[g] "The laws of the church regard only the external conduct. They do not require the inward belief of the mind in articles of faith, or the ſecret grace of the heart in moral duties. Theſe things the miniſters of Chriſt teach and exhort, but do not command. But the actions which they preſcribe by their laws, are ſuch external performances as are the viſible ſigns, the natural and proper expreſſions of ſuch inward acts and diſpoſitions of ſoul, as Chriſt has commanded. And theſe laws they do not affirm to have any farther obligation on the conſcience, than as the performance directed by them is a proper ſign and expreſſion of ſuch an inward diſpoſition of the heart as Chriſt requires, and conſequently is agreeable and ſubſervient to his law. And when even the action is thus qualified, they do not pretend that the conſcience is obliged by their law, but by Chriſt's." Rogers of the viſible church, p. 101.

ing, writing, teaching perverſe things, not the thinking or conceiving them: for, how can a man be cenſured for private thoughts, which no one knows but himſelf? But if any perſons preſume to teach falſe doctrine, and endeavour to draw diſciples after them, then indeed they are accountable to the church, as much as another kind of offenders are accountable to the ſtate. Chriſtianity is a ſocial religion[h], and the members of it are bound to ſubmit, in their external behaviour, to the rules of the ſociety, under pain of forfeiting the outward privileges of it. And with what modeſty, decency, or conſiſtency, can any man claim a right of perverting his fellow chriſtians, as he pleaſes, and at the ſame time deny others a right of doing what in them lies to preſerve their people from falling into the ſnares laid for them? It is to very little purpoſe for ſeducers to plead, that their conſciences are oppreſſed by church cenſures, or their liberty reſtrained: for would not the conſciences of better men be more oppreſſed, and their liberty reſtrained, if they were obliged tamely to ſit by, and look on, while their flocks are torn from them, not permitted to make uſe of thoſe ſpiritual powers which God has put into their hands? either therefore let the adverſaries be content to keep their thoughts to themſelves, and then nobody can have dominion over their faith at all; or if they reſolve to uſurp upon others,

[h] See Biſhop Potter on Church Government, C. i.

others, and to take all advantages for ſpreading falſe doctrines, let them not be offended, if the guides of ſouls, whoſe peculiar charge it is, uſe their beſt endeavours, in a proper manner, to apply ſuch preſervatives as ſcripture directs in thoſe caſes. This is not taking cognizance of the inner man, but of the outward behaviour only; and that ſo far as ſuch outward behaviour affects the proſperity or ſafety of the whole community, and might be of dangerous conſequence to the peace of the church, the purity of the chriſtian faith, the honour of God and religion, and the everlaſting intereſts of mankind. Now, can the guarding, in a chriſtian manner, againſt ſuch fatal miſchiefs, be properly or juſtly ſtiled affecting dominion over others? or is it not rather making uſe of a power which God has given them, to hinder others from exerciſing a lawleſs dominion over chriſtians, and over the church of God? Say, that the church is fallible, what then? are her adverſaries infallible? or are they leſs liable to abuſe their liberty, than the church is to miſemploy her authority? But enough of this.

VII. There is another objection of more weight than the former, namely, that the cenſuring of heretics may often provoke them to return the like cenſures; and thus a kind of reciprocation of cenſures may be carried on to the great diſturbance of the public peace, and the deſtruction of chriſtian charity. A late writer expreſſes the thing in a very lively manner,

manner, but ſomewhat over ſtrained, thus: "May "not arians, in their turn, think you guilty "of as great a ſin, in oppoſing what they "call the truth? and may not chriſtians, on "all ſides, in ſo great and indeed neceſſary "difference of opinions, rant and bluſter againſt "one another for the ſame reaſon, and bring "their conſtant accuſations againſt thoſe who "cannot think and ſay as they do, for deny-"ing the faith; or againſt thoſe who have the "ſame notions with themſelves, for betraying "it? But what then? would not chriſtian "churches become cock pits, or fencing ſtages[1]?" In reply to what is here urged, I will not ſo far diſguiſe my ſentiments, as not to allow that it is a conſideration of ſome moment: but yet there are other conſiderations of ſtill greater moment, which muſt preponderate, and weigh down the ſcale. It is very certain that ungodly men, for a cloke, will make uſe of the ſame pleas, and claim the ſame privileges which righteous men do: and an erroneous conſcience may honeſty (if invincibly ignorant) uſurp the ſame rights which a well grounded faith has a clear title to. But ſtill there is a very wide difference between true and falſe, between right and wrong: and it is no argument againſt the uſe of proper methods in a righteous cauſe, that others may abuſe the ſame methods in a cauſe of a very contrary nature and quality. But I ſhall

[1] Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 44.

ſhall debate this point more diſtinctly, both from ſcripture and reaſon, as it is a point of ſome moment.

1. Let us conſider what light we can have from ſcripture. It is fact, that the power of excommunication began to be miſemployed, and to be turned againſt the church itſelf, even in the times of the apoſtles: for Diotrephes, loving to have the pre-eminence, caſt ſome perſons out of the church[k], very unwarrantably, and even in defiance to St. John himſelf. Yet that uſurpation of power, or abuſe of power, did not move St. John to condemn the uſe of it in a proper way. So far from it, that he threatened to repay Diotrephes in his kind, to excommunicate, or depoſe him, for his ſo raſhly cenſuring other perſons. *Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doth, prating againſt us with malicious words*[l]. We may obſerve likewiſe from St. John's 2d epiſtle[m], and from the charges given to the churches of Pergamus and Thyatira[n], that the uſe of excommunication was to be retained in the church, and was recommended from heaven by our Lord himſelf. And if it be ſaid, that the Nicolaitans were an abominable ſect, that alters not the caſe at all, ſo far as the preſent objection is concerned: for, the more wicked any ſect was, the more likely to retaliate upon the church, and to make all poſſible diſturbance, when provoked to it. Notwithſtanding

[k] 3 John 10. [l] 3 John 10. See Biſhop Potter on Church Government, p. 380. [m] 2 John 10, 11. [n] Rev. ii. 14, 15, 20.

ſtanding all which, that accidental inconvenience, of a miſapplication of power, was not judged conſiderable enough to counterbalance the great advantages and important uſes of the ſame power rightly employed. And as we have the authority of an apoſtle, who had the ſpirit of God to direct him in what he wrote, and in what he did; this alone may be ſufficient to determine the point in queſtion. For whatever we may be apt to imagine, (upon a ſuperficial, or limited view of circumſtances) it is certain, that infinite wiſdom cannot err, and therefore by that direction we ought to abide. St. Paul ſeems to have left us a general rule for all caſes of this nature, in theſe words: *Stand faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the goſpel, and in nothing terrified by your adverſaries*°, &c.

2. As to the reaſon of the thing, it is a known rule, that when there is a neceſſity on one hand, it is in vain to plead inconveniencies on the other. God has ſent mankind a charter of ſalvation: it is neceſſary, above all things, that this charter be preſerved inviolable; that it ſhould not be falſified, perverted, fruſtrated. There will always be ſome or other, ſet on by the grand enemy of mankind, who will be labouring to corrupt and adulterate it, either adding to it, or taking from it: and if ſuch practices are ſuffered to go on without rebuke, there is an end of chriſtianity. Here lies the neceſſity of watching againſt all ſuch attempts, and

° Philip. i. 27, 28.

and ſtrenuouſly reſiſting them; which cannot be done effectually without condemning the authors, and in the laſt reſult ſeparating from them. Hence may ariſe mutual contentions and bickerings: let them bear the blame who give the offence, and are aggreſſors in the conteſts. Truths of everlaſting moment muſt be ſupported, whether with peace, or without. The apoſtles were cenſured as men that *turned the world upſide down*[p]. The fault was in the world, and not in them. Their errand was important enough for the riſking ſuch a conſequence. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf predicted what the accidental effect would be of the preaching of the goſpel; that it would *ſet a man at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt the mother*[q], and ſo on; which perhaps, in ridicule, might be called making cock pits, or fencing ſtages: but the goſpel was worth it, and carried more than enough in it, to make mankind amends. As long as religion is held in any value or eſteem, and meets with oppoſers, it muſt occaſion warm diſputes: who would wiſh that it ſhould not? What remedy is there for it, while men are men, which is not infinitely worſe than the diſeaſe? a total contempt of religion might end all diſputes about it, nothing elſe will: and even then our contentions would not be fewer, but more; only they would be about matters of another kind, about every thing that we ſhould value or eſteem. Upon the whole, it is better, I ſuppoſe,

[p] Acts xvii. 6. [q] Matthew x. 35.

I ſuppoſe, that we ſhould have ſome religion, though we often contend about it, than to have none at all, and to quarrel ten times oftner about trifles. It has been complained of, and has been thought to be a ſhrewd remark, that eccleſiaſtical hiſtory is made up of little elſe but religious conteſts and animoſities of churchmen. But, pray, what is the hiſtory of mankind, but a hiſtory of wars and contentions about ſomething or other, which they had a tender concern for? and it would be ſtrange indeed, if a hiſtory of religion, the greateſt concern of all, ſhould not contain many conteſts. Who could believe that men had any religion, if during the ſtate of the church militant, and while there is like to be great oppoſition, there ſhould be no warmth or vivacity ſhewn in defence of it? But this I have hinted more than once already. Now to return to our point. Though the cenſuring of men that corrupt the faith, may provoke, may increaſe ill blood, &c. yet it muſt be done: and to decline it, when neceſſary, is a culpable moderation, a blameable timidity. But it is farther to be conſidered, that though rejecting ſome perſons from the communion of the church, may inflame the quarrel between the church and its adverſaries, yet it tends to preſerve and promote the peace of its members within. Therefore St. Paul preſcribes this very remedy, for the ſecuring the peace of the church: *mark them which cauſe diviſions and offences, contrary to the doctrine which*

which ye have learned, and avoid them[r]. So that though in ſome ſenſe or reſpect, ſtrict order and diſcipline may accidentally heighten differences, yet its true and natural tendency is peace; which it ſerves and promotes in one view, much more than it obſtructs or differves it in another. The objection therefore is grounded upon a falſe preſumption, that peace ſuffers upon the whole, by ſuch conduct; which we deny: for, upon a juſt ballancing of the account, peace is very much befriended by it[s], and true and proper chriſtian peace could not long ſubſiſt without it.

However, I allow there is ſo much weight in the objection, which I have been anſwering, that the conſideration of it ought to make us exceeding cautious and deliberate, as to the ſteps we take, and the heights we proceed to, in all caſes of that nature: not to multiply neceſſaries without, or beyond reaſon; not to divide upon indifferent rites, cuſtoms, ceremonies, as Pope Victor is known to have done; nor upon dubious points of diſcipline, as Pope Stephen did: who had indeed right on his ſide, as to the matter in diſpute, but puſhed it too rigorouſly; and St. Cyprian, though miſtaken, was yet the wiſer, humbler, and better man. Where the main cauſe is both clear and weighty, yet even there many prudential cautions ſhould be taken; not to ſuſpect any perſons without ſufficient evidence; not to be prying and

[r] Rom. xvi. 17.
[s] See Rogers's Review, p. 290, 291.

and inquiſitive into their retired ſentiments (miniſters only excepted, or candidates for the miniſtry, whoſe faith ſhould be ſtrictly inquired into[a], before they be allowed) not to proceed to rigours with any man, till all gentle meaſures have been firſt tried; nor to break communion with any who do not openly eſpouſe, and pertinaciouſly abet falſe and pernicious doctrines. Theſe, I apprehend, are the prudential cautions proper in ſuch caſes: and there may be more of like kind, which every man's common reaſon and diſcretion may ſupply. If truth and peace can be maintained together, that is the moſt deſirable conjunction which a good man can wiſh for: but if human affairs will not always admit of both, then the rule is, out of two evils to chooſe the leaſt, or of two advantages to prefer the greateſt. Where divine truths, and human cuſtoms or dictates claſh, we muſt *obey God, rather than man:* in other caſes, civility and tenderneſs towards all men, is true obedience towards God. It requires good judgment to diſcern, under various circumſtances, the true and preciſe boundaries between ſinful men pleaſing, and chriſtian charity: but this is certain, we are as much (yea, and more) obliged to maintain the fundamentals of faith, as to keep up peace. And it would be but an ill way, to preſerve peace (if it might be called peace[b]) by forfeiting our chriſtianity; or to enlarge

[a] 1 Tim. iii. 9, 10. v. 22.

[b] Vid. Hilar. contr. Auxent. p. 1263. edit. Bened.

enlarge chriſtian communion, by receiving thoſe who, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, are not chriſtians[c]. "Unity is not to be purchaſed at ſo "dear a rate. It were a thing much to be "deſired, that there were no diviſions; yet dif- "ference of opinions touching things contro- "verted, is rather to be choſen than unanimous "concord in damned errors. As it is better for "men to go to heaven by divers ways, or rather "by divers paths of the ſame way, than in the "ſame path to go on peaceably to hell. Amica "pax, magis amica veritas[d]."

VIII. It has been ſometimes pleaded, in bar to the principles which we have before aſſerted, "That no one ought to be excluded from chriſ- "tian communion, whatever his faith be, pro- "vided he acknowledges ſacred writ for his "rule, and is ready to admit any creeds or con- "feſſions drawn up entirely in ſcripture terms." To which I anſwer, that a man who never declares his faith otherwiſe than in ſcripture words, is very ſafe from cenſure, and can never be excluded from chriſtian communion for hereſy. It is the maintaining doctrines contrary to ſcripture, in points fundamental, which makes a heretic; and therefore if a man never interprets at all, but barely repeats the words, he is perfectly ſecure ſo far; and no one can condemn him. If this then be all that the plea aims at, it

[c] Vid. Suicer. in voce Χριστιανός. p, 1540, 1541. Bingham. Antiq. B. 1. C. iii. ſ. 4.

[d] Chillingworth, p. 218. alias 253.

it is foreign and impertinent to the cauſe in hand.

But if the meaning of the plea be this, that though a man teaches any wild doctrines whatever, yet if he does but father thoſe doctrines upon ſacred writ, by any feigned and forced conſtruction, (acknowledging ſcripture all the while as his rule of faith) he ought to be received as a fellow chriſtian; I ſay, if this be the plea, it is ſo manifeſtly abſurd and ridiculous, at the firſt hearing, that it can ſcarce deſerve a ſerious anſwer. For does the faith of Chriſt lie in words only, or in things[e]? or is the repeating of the bare letter of ſcripture, after a man has ſpirited away the ſenſe, delivering divine truths, or contradicting and defeating them? to make the caſe plainer, I ſhall illuſtrate it by a reſembling inſtance. Franciſcus a Sancta Clara, a known papiſt, (who publiſhed his book A. D. 1634,) contrived to make our 39 articles ſpeak his own ſentiments, reconciling them with great dexterity, and moſt amazing ſubtilty, to the council of Trent. Now, put the queſtion, whether upon his thus profeſſing his faith in proteſtant terms, popiſhly interpreted, he could juſtly claim every privilege

[e] Nulla vox divina ita diſſoluta eſt et diffuſa, ut verba tantum defendantur, et ratio verborum non conſtituatur. Tertullian de Præſcript. C. ix.

Nec ſibi blandiantur [Hæretici] ſi de ſcripturarum capitulis videntur ſibi affirmare quod dicunt: quum et diabolus de ſcripturis aliqua ſit loquutus: et ſcripturæ non in legendo conſiſtant, ſed in intelligendo. Hieronym. dial. adv. Lucifer. p. 386.

privilege of a church of England man, and whether we were bound to receive him as a fellow proteſtant? A very little ſhare of common ſenſe, I preſume, will be ſufficient to determine the queſtion in the negative. The like I ſay of any perſon who interprets our chriſtian charter to an antichriſtian ſenſe: he has no more right to be admitted as a fellow chriſtian, than the other had to be admitted a fellow proteſtant. For though both admit the ſame words or forms which we do, yet ſo long as they teach things directly contrary to thoſe very words or forms rightly underſtood, they are chargeable with falſe doctrine, in our account; and their teaching ſuch doctrine in a manner ſo inſidious and fraudulent, is ſo far from alleviating their guilt, that it greatly inhances it. It may be ſaid perhaps, in the way of reply, that Franciſcus a Sancta Clara knew that he perverted the true meaning and intent of our articles, while thoſe that pervert the ſenſe of ſcripture, may believe that they juſtly interpret it. If that be the caſe, it is true that it will make a difference: but I have no occaſion to conſider that difference here, being foreign to the preſent point. For ſuppoſing the perverters of ſcripture to do it ever ſo wickedly and fraudulently, yet they may make uſe of the ſame plea, that they are ready to profeſs their faith in ſcripture words, and therefore ought not to be excluded from chriſtian communion. A valentinian, a montaniſt, a muggletonian, or any other

other wild ſectary, by this rule, might equally claim chriſtian communion, provided he does not reject ſcripture itſelf, and turn infidel. Now, a plea which thus manifeſtly overſhoots the mark, ought to be rejected as an abſurd plea, like as an argument which proves too much, ought to be thrown aſide as worth nothing. Thoſe who undeſignedly pervert ſcripture, ſhould have ſomething better to plead than their retaining the words of ſcripture: otherwiſe their plea reaches no farther than theirs does who induſtriouſly do the ſame thing; for they alſo retain the ſame words. Upon the whole therefore, a man's retaining the bare letter of ſcripture, while he corrupts the ſenſe is no ſufficient reaſon for receiving him to chriſtian communion. For he is not only chargeable with denying the faith, as much as if he had rejected the text itſelf[f], but with perverting the words, and defeating the ſenſe, while he profeſſes an outward veneration for both. I cannot better expreſs this whole matter than a late excellent divine of our church has done, in the words here following: "It is not barely repeating ſo "many words, but the aſſenting to the pro-"poſition expreſſed by thoſe words, which Chriſt "requires.—The propoſition affirmed or denied "in Chriſt's words, is the doctrine of Chriſt. "He therefore who will not believe the pro-"poſition affirmed in Chriſt's words ought to "be

[f] Tantum veritati obſtrepit adulter ſenſus, quantum et corruptor ſtilus. Tertull. de Præſcript. C. xvii.

" be looked upon by the church, as an hea-
" then and a publican.—Let us take for
" inſtance, theſe propoſitions, *Jeſus is the Chriſt*;
" *He was crucified*; *roſe again from the dead*:
" every word and ſentence of ſcripture, in which
" theſe articles are delivered, the moſt heretical
" among the Quakers will profeſs their aſſent
" to, but then they mean only this, that Chriſt
" is an internal principle of light within them,
" that his crucifixion and reſurrection are no-
" thing elſe but the mortification and regenera-
" tion of every believer.—Now are theſe the
" doctrines of Chriſt, or are they not? If they
" are not, if they are contrary to the doctrines of
" Chriſt, then the perſons underſtanding theſe
" ſcriptures in ſuch a ſenſe, may juſtly be looked
" upon as heathens and publicans, and, not-
" withſtanding their readineſs to profeſs the
" words of ſcripture, unfit to be admitted, or
" continued in the church[g]." Thus far Dr. Rogers, whoſe words I take to be a juſt and full anſwer to the objection I have been examining. The reader will obſerve, that I have not been conſidering how far ſcripture words may, or may not be proper in creeds, teſts, confeſſions, and the like, and in what caſes it may be prudent or neceſſary to expreſs the ſcripture ſenſe in phraſes ſuited to times, places, and circumſtances: queſtions of that kind fall not within my preſent argument, but have been largely and thoroughly

[g] Rogers's Review, p. 399, 400.

thoroughly treated of by others[h]. All I am concerned to ſhew is, that if any perſons are found to pervert the ſenſe of ſcripture in any notorious manner, ſo as thereby to undermine the eſſentials of faith, their pretending a high regard for the authority of ſacred writ, or for the letter of it, is not reaſon ſufficient for receiving them as fellow chriſtians.

IX. There is one objection more, which might have been brought in as an appendage to objection the ſecond, had I ſooner thought of it, but may conveniently enough have a diſtinct conſideration here; namely, that the charging hereſy as a crime of the firſt magnitude, ſeems to give too much countenance to the ſanguinary proceedings of papiſts againſt it. The objection runs thus: "If theſe charges againſt them "are juſt, and their fellow creatures have any "authority to chaſtiſe them for ſuch enormi-"ties, I cannot ſee why the Romiſh church "ſhould be blamed for roaſting ſuch accurſed "villains (as the arians) among other heretics. "If we think a traytor againſt an earthly po-"tentate worthy of death, how much more "one who vilifies the Lord of heaven and "earth? Is a murtherer of an earthly father ob-"noxious to death, and ſhall ſuch a viper as "this eſcape[i]? If civil power have authority to "puniſh

[h] Preface to the Weſtminſter confeſſion, p. 105.—142.
Stebbing's rational Enquiry, p. 19.—56.
Rogers's Review, p. 395.—411.
[i] Vindication of Mr. Nation's Sermon, p. 12. Compare Mr. P. C.'s Letter in anſwer, p. 23, 24.

"puniſh heretics, ſuch a villain deſerves far "ſeverer penalties to be inflicted on him, than "multitudes of others whoſe injuries to their "neighbours expoſe them, by our ſtatute laws, "to the gallows[k]." The ſum of this argument, ſo far as it may be called an argument, amounts to thus much; that it is wrong to charge hereſy in general, or arianiſm in particular, with wickedneſs and impiety to any high degree, ſince it is neither felony nor treaſon: or if it be as bad, or worſe than either, then the papiſts are juſtified in all their ſanguinary proceedings; which among proteſtants, is confeſſedly abſurd. To which I anſwer, that the objection proceeds upon ſeveral falſe ſuppoſitions: as 1. That thoſe who plead only for ſpiritual reproofs or cenſures, are pleading at the ſame time for civil penalties. 2. That the magnitude of crimes is to be meaſured by what paſſes in civil courts. 3. That civil courts look ſtrictly to the demerits of the criminal, and not rather to the neceſſities of ſtate. In oppoſition to theſe and the like miſtakes, I obſerve:

1. That ſcripture itſelf warrants and commands ſpiritual reproofs and cenſures; which is a point very foreign to that of civil penalties. St. Jude, St. Peter, St. John, St. Paul, and Chriſt himſelf are often very ſharp and poignant in their reproofs, and cenſures, where they had no thought of expoſing the offenders to civil penalties, or of juſtifying any ſanguinary proceedings.

[k] Reply to Mr. P. C's. Letter, p. 21.

ings. St. Jude ſcruples not to call the heretics of his time *ungodly men*, deniers *of the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, filthy dreamers, deſpiſers of dominion*, followers of *Cain*, *Balaam*, and *Core*, *raging waves of the ſea, foaming out their own ſhame, wandering ſtars to whom is reſerved the blackneſs of darkneſs for ever:* and yet amidſt all this ſevere but juſt reproof, I preſume, he never would have adviſed the correcting them by fire and faggot. St. Peter treats the ſame men with the like ſharpneſs of ſtile, in his ſecond epiſtle: but it would be injurious to conclude from thence, that he was for ſanguinary meaſures. St. John, in his epiſtles, gives very hard names to heretics, calling them *antichriſts*, &c. yet this does not prove, that he was for uſing any violent methods with them. St. Paul deſcribes the heretics of his time in very black characters, ſuch as they deſerved, yea, and pronounced them accurſed; and yet it does not appear that he would have approved the roaſting of them, had they been much greater villians than they were. *Shaming* them, *humbling* them, and bringing them to *repentance*, that their *ſouls might be ſaved in the day of the Lord Jeſus*, was the utmoſt hurt he intended them. Our bleſſed Lord himſelf rebuked many with great ſharpneſs, calling them *hypocrites*, *blind guides*, *children of hell*, *fools*, *whited ſepulchres*, *ſerpents*, *vipers*[1], and the like: and yet it does not appear, that he would have approved any violent ſanguinary proceedings with thoſe

[1] See Matt. xxiii.

thoſe very perſons. Therefore it is wrong to furniſh the Romaniſts with arguments for their cruelties; as if civil penalties were juſt wherever ſmart rebukes are proper, or as if it were warrantable to puniſh according to the degree of wickedneſs, though the wickedneſs be of ſuch a kind as falls not properly under civil cognizance.

2. There may be crimes much greater than felony or treaſon; ſuch as apoſtaſy, (which is *crucifying the Son of God afreſh, and putting him to an open ſhame*) blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and ſome kinds of hereſy. Certainly, it may be lawful for chriſtian divines to ſet forth thoſe wickedneſſes in their proper colours, and they ought to do it: though at the ſame time, they may deſire that the offenders in ſuch ſort may rather live to repent, than ſuffer death, or any civil penalties. And what if felons, or traitors againſt the ſtate, be puniſhed with death? It does not from thence follow, that they are the greateſt of ſinners; but reaſons of government require, that crimes which more particularly affect the ſtate, ſhould be puniſhed by the ſtate: the reſt are left to the cenſures of the church, and the righteous judgment of God.

3. And I muſt further obſerve, that civil penalties look not merely at the demerits of the criminal, but the neceſſities of the civil community. Civil governors do not, cannot obſerve any exact proportion: God only can do it, in his final retributions. Theft and murder are crimes

crimes of a different magnitude: yet they are equally liable to capital penalties. As to hereſies of ſuch a kind, they may be greater crimes than either, in God's ſight: but it is not ſo neceſſary for a ſtate to take cognizance of them, unleſs they break in upon civil peace. Felonies will hurt many innocent men, who have no poſſible way to eſcape: none can be hurt by hereſies (after proper warning given) but with their own conſent. And therefore if ſpiritual cenſures, reproofs, admonitions, and other the like preſervatives be duly applied, thoſe are ordinarily ſufficient in caſes of this nature: for, if after ſuch warnings given, any perſons will ſtill liſten to deceivers, and run in with them, they periſh with their eyes open, and may take the blame to themſelves. I mention this as one reaſon among many, why hereſies, though ſuppoſed to be crimes of the firſt magnitude, yet ought to be treated in a milder way than crimes againſt the ſtate. And I ſhall ſubjoin another reaſon to inforce the former, namely, that when we ſpeak of hereſies as heinous crtmes, we mean as materially conſidered, not determining whether the men are formally ſo wicked as thoſe expreſſions amount to: which again makes a ſenſible difference between this caſe and the other of felonies or treaſons, where the offenders commonly ſin directly againſt conſcience, and cannot plead ſo much as a good meaning or deſign. However, that favourable preſumption, pleadable in excuſe for hereſies, ought to be no bar to ſpiritual

ritual cenſures. For if the perſons offend knowingly, then no cenſure of that kind can be thought ſevere: and if they offend ignorantly, ſuch awakening admonitions may be of great uſe to them, to recover them from their ſtupid lethargy. And if the effect anſwers, they are delivered from a doubtful ſtate, which at moſt could promiſe them pardon only, or reſt them upon uncovenanted mercy, to a ſtate of well grounded hope and joy, intitling them to a reward: but this I hinted before[m]. Upon the whole, there appears no force in the disjunction, that heretics ought either to be puniſhed with death, or not cenſured as blaſphemers and grievous ſinners. Extremes are always wrong, whether of mildneſs, or ſeverity: and there is a medium between taking violent meaſures with them, and treating them as fellow chriſtians. The ſin of corrupting the faith, dividing the church, and ſeducing the people, cannot eaſily be too much aggravated, in order to create a juſt abhorrence of it: and it is the more neceſſary, becauſe ordinarily men are not ſo apprehenſive of the heinouſneſs of this ſin, as they are of the iniquity of treaſon or felony, or groſs immoralities.

I have now finiſhed what I intended as to the argumentative part: but it remains ſtill to confirm the main thing by the judgment and practice of the ancients, who may be properly called in, and will be found to be of conſiderable weight

[m] See above, p. 126.

weight in the controverſy. If the ſcripture be plain to us now, in all things neceſſary, the ſame ſcripture was undoubtedly plain to them, and to them more eſpecially: and therefore, their judgment or practice cannot but be of uſe to us, if it be only to render plain things ſtill plainer, as there are degrees of plainneſs.

After I had finiſhed this chapter, I had the pleaſure of reading Mr. Ball's little treatiſe of 33 octavo pages, in anſwer to moſt of the ſame objections[n] which I have been conſidering. If I may be allowed to give my judgment of it, it is written with great ſtrength and ſolidity, without colouring or diſguiſes, and is extremely well ſuited to common capacities. One ſhall not eaſily find more good ſenſe, and cloſe argument in ſo ſhort a compaſs. The *Sober and charitable diſquiſition*, as I apprehend, was intended by way of reply to that pamphlet of Mr. Ball's. But every diſcerning reader who ſhall compare the two performances together, will eaſily perceive the difference between artificial logic and natural, between laboured ſubtleties and plain naked truth.

[n] An anſwer to ſome common objections made againſt thoſe miniſters in the weſt, who have appeared in defence of the doctrine of the ever bleſſed Trinity, and its importance. Written with all plainneſs, for the uſe of private chriſtians. By J. Ball. Exon: printed by A. Brice, &c. A. D. 1727.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

A ſummary view of the judgment and practice of the primitive churches, in relation to the neceſſity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity.

THE very judicious and learned biſhop Bull has repreſented this matter in the fulleſt and cleareſt light, in a ſet treatiſe, profeſſedly written by way of reply to Epiſcopius, as I have before hinted in the entrance. To him therefore I refer ſuch readers as will be at the pains to look thoroughly into the ſubject of this chapter; while I content myſelf with giving a ſummary view of rhe main things, interſperſing here and there a few ſlight obſervations, which may be as it were ſupplemental to that great work. There are three ways of coming at the ſentiments of the primitive church, as to the neceſſity, or importance of believing any doctrine: 1. By conſulting the ancient creeds, conceived to take in the moſt important articles of faith, when rightly underſtood. 2. By obſerving what doctrines were all along condemned as impious and heretical. 3. By collecting the teſtimonies of fathers declaring their own ſentiments, or the church's, or both, as to what doctrines are important, or what opinions pernicious and dangerous.

I. I ſhall

I. I ſhall begin with creeds. Here it is obſervable, that the doctrine of the Trinity, implicit or expreſs, always made an article in the ancient creeds: nay, ſeveral learned men have conceived, that in the earlieſt times, it made up the whole[o]. Epiſcopius himſelf was of opinion that the ancient baptiſmal creed was no more than this: I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt[p]. He deſigned, by the obſervation, to ſerve his own hypotheſis, viz. that the divine eternal generation of the Son was not inſerted in the creeds from the beginning. But he did not conſider how much at the ſame time he differved his own cauſe another way, by making the doctrine of the Trinity ſo important, as to have been the ſole article (if I may ſo ſpeak) or intire matter of the firſt creeds. Nothing can be ſtronger for that doctrine, than that the ancient creeds ſhould be comprized in theſe few words: *I believe in God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt*; ſince it is declaring the ſacred three to be the one God[q], and

[o] Bull Judic. Eccl Cathol. C. iii. ſ. 3. p. 308. C. vi. ſ. 80. p. 331. Wall. Hiſt. of Inf. Baptiſm. Par. ii. C. ix. ſ. 11. p. 591. Stillingfleet. Vindic. Trin. 178. Suicer. Theſaur. T. ii. p. 1093.

[p] Antiquiſſimum, quodque in primâ baptiſmi adminiſtratione jam inde ab ipſis apoſtolorum temporibus uſitabatur, hoc erat: credo in Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum ſanctum; nempè ad præſcriptam ab ipſo Jeſu formulam.

Epiſcop. Inſtitut. L. iv. C. xxxiv. p. 340.

[q] Perſpicuum eſt in hâc formulâ, credo in Deum, Patrem Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, vocem Deum ἀπὸ κοινοῦ ad omnes tres, nempe Patrem, Filium et Spiritum Sanctum referri. Quod græci

and recommending that faith as the prime thing, or the one thing neceſſary, without which no man could be a chriſtian. Biſhop Bull very juſtly obſerves, that the ſhort creed now mentioned expreſſed the doctrine of the Trinity in a clearer, cloſer, and ſtronger manner than ſome of the more enlarged creeds afterwards did. For the inſerting of additional articles, time after time, carried the words Son and Holy Ghoſt ſo far off from the word God, that it might look as if that high title, which belonged indifferently to all three, was there applied to the Father only: though the compilers of thoſe larger creeds really deſigned the ſame common application of the name God, as before[r]. From hence therefore it appears, that allowing Epiſcopius the ſuppoſition which he goes upon, in relation to the ſhort conciſe form of the firſt baptiſmal creed, yet it is ſo far from favouring his

græci adhuc clariùs exprimunt; Πιστεύω εἰς τὸν θεὸν, τὸν πατέρα, τὸν υἱὸν, καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα. Ita ſane hanc brevem confeſſionem veteres intellexere. Hinc Tertullianus (adv. Prax. C. xiii.) communem chriſtianorum de patre, filio, et ſpiritu ſancto fidem exponens, ait; et Pater Deus, et Filius Deus, et Spiritus Sanctus Deus, et Deus unuſquiſque. Cyprianus itidem, &c. Bull. Judic. C. iv. ſ. 3. p. 308.

[r] Mihi ſane videtur in his paucis verbis: Credo in Deum, Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, magnam illam veritatem, nempe Filium et Spiritum Sanctum, unum eſſe cum Patre Deum, aliquatenus clariùs exprimi quam in fuſioribus quibuſdam ſymbolis quæ ſubſecuta ſunt. Nam per additamenta illa poſt verba, credo in Deum Patrem, et adjectiones poſt mentionem Filii, non repetitâ voce Deum in articulis de Filio, et Spiritu Sancto, videri poteſt, et nonnullis viſum eſt, Dei appellatio ad ſolum Patrem pertinere; planè contra mentem ac ſententiam eorum qui latiora illa ſymbola condiderunt. Bull. ibid. p. 309.

his cauſe, that it makes againſt him; ſince that form ſo worded carries in it a confeſſion of the three divine perſons being the one true God of chriſtians: and if the creed in the firſt age contained no more; then that very doctrine muſt have been looked upon, from the beginning, as the ſum and ſubſtance of chriſtianity.

As to the queſtion about the length of the apoſtolical creeds, or the number of articles they contained, learned men may offer their conjectures, and have done it[a]: but perhaps, after all, we have not ſufficient light to determine any thing with certainty. What I at preſent apprehend of that matter, I ſhall expreſs diſtinctly, in the particulars here following. 1. It appears to me not improbable, that the earlieſt creeds, as they took their riſe from the form of baptiſm, contained little or nothing beyond it. There is a ſhort creed of that kind ſtill extant in Cyril[b], comprehending but one ſingle article, beſides the article of the Trinity. And I may obſerve, that the ſhorter form of the Roman creed, (called the Apoſtle's) publiſhed by Uſher[c], ſeems to

[a] See Critical Hiſtory of the Creed, p. 33, &c.
Grabe in Annotatis ad Bulli judic. C. 4, 5, 6.
Bingham, Eccleſ. Antiq. L. x. C. iii. ſ. 7.
Rogers's Review, &c. p. 261—271.
Berriman's hiſtorical Account, &c. p. 21, &c.
Buddei Iſagoge, Vol. i. p. 441, &c.

[b] Πιστεύω εἰς τὸν πατέρα, καὶ εἰς τὸν υἱὸν, καὶ εἰς τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα, καὶ εἰς ἓν βάπτισμα μετανόιας, Catech. Myſtag. 1. N. 6.

[c] Uſher de Symbolis, p. 6, 9.

to carry ſome marks of its having been formerly ſhorter, by its bringing in the article of the Holy Ghoſt in this abrupt manner *And in the Holy Ghoſt:* words which came in very aptly in the primitive form, when they immediately followed *and in the Son*; but which would appear abrupt, after ſeveral new inſertions made between the two articles. Wherefore to ſalve that appearing abruptneſs, the church afterwards ſtriking out *And*, inſerted *I believe* in that place, making the article run, as it does at this day, *I believe in the Holy Ghoſt*, &c. This obſervable circumſtance relating to that creed, is a confirmation of the opinion, that the firſt creeds (in ſome places at leaſt) were of ſuch a kind as Epiſcopius mentions. 2. It appears to me farther probable, that when the creeds ran in that ſhort conciſe form, yet the interrogatories to and anſwers of the catechumens at baptiſm, were fuller and more explicit. Tertullian takes notice, that the reſponſes in baptiſm were then ſomewhat larger than the model laid down by Chriſt[d], meaning, than the form of baptiſm: and he refers the enlargement of the reſponſes to immemorial cuſtom or tradition. Firmilian of the third century, ſpeaks of the ſymbol[e], or creed of the Trinity, and of the preſcribed eccleſiaſtical

[d] Dehinc ter mergitamur, amplius aliquid reſpondentes quam dominus in evangelio determinavit. Tertull. de Coron. C. iii. p. 102.

[e] Cui nec ſymbolum Trinitatis, nec interrogatio legitima et eccleſiaſtica defuit, Cyprian Opp. Ep. 75. p. 223.

cleſiaſtical interrogation, and ſeems to make them diſtinct, ſuppoſing that the ſymbol of the Trinity contained leſs than the other. But if the whole ran under the name of the creed of the Trinity, even that ſhews what was looked upon as the principal thing in the creed, giving denomination to the whole: and it affords a probable argument, that, at firſt, the whole was compriſed in it. 3. It is not unlikely, that ſome of the additional articles might have been inſerted into the creeds, in the very age of the apoſtles, in oppoſition to the hereſies then breaking out. This hypotheſis appears to me much more probable, than that ſuch articles ſhould be inſerted in oppoſition to paganiſm, or judaiſm. It was needleſs to caution the new converts againſt paganiſm, or judaiſm, which they had formally renounced: but it might be neceſſary to guard them againſt falſe chriſtians, who pretended to follow the ſame rule of faith, and to admit the ſame ſcriptures. This ſuppoſition much better accounts for the article of *Maker of heaven and earth*, being ſo long omitted in the Roman creed (perhaps for ſix or ſeven centuries) though it was inſerted in other creeds, where hereſies gave occaſion for it[f]. And this alſo beſt accounts for the obſervable variety in the additional articles to the ancient creeds: becauſe the ſeveral churches adopted thoſe articles which ſuited

[f] See Critical Hiſtory of the Apoſtles Creed, p. 96.—106.

ſuited their then preſent circumſtances, according as they found the faith of Chriſt moſt endangered in this or that particular[g], by the hereſies then and there reigning. I pretend not to propoſe this as certain fact, but as a probable, or the moſt probable opinion[h]. The ſum of the whole matter ſeems to be well and juſtly expreſſed by a celebrated writer, as follows: "Not long after the apoſtles days, and "even in the apoſtolic age itſelf, ſeveral here-"ſies ſprung up in the church, ſubverſive of "the fundamentals of chriſtianity: to prevent "the malignant effects whereof, and to hin-"der ſuch heretics from an undiſcernible mix-"ing themſelves with the orthodox chriſtians, "as alſo to eſtabliſh and ſtrengthen the true "believers in the neceſſary truths of the Chriſ-"tian religion, the chriſtian verities oppoſite "to thoſe hereſies were inſerted in the creed; "and together with other articles, which had "without intermiſſion been conſtantly uſed from "the time of the apoſtles, were propoſed to the "aſſent

[g] See my Sermons, p. 324, &c.
Critical Hiſtory of the Athanaſian Creed, page 158, alias page 285.

[h] Proxime illi citra controverſiam ad verum accedunt, qui ſymbolum hocce (Romanum) ex ſolemni baptiſmi formulâ, quâ baptizandi ſe credere profitebantur, in Deum Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum Sanctum, enatum exiſtimant; ita quidem, ut ſubinde additamenta quædam, hæreticorum, qui eccleſiam turbabant, erroribus oppoſita adjicerentur, donec in eam, quâ hodie conſpicitur, formam exſurgeret, Buddei Iſagog. Vol. i. p. 443. Conf. Witſius in Symb. Apoſt. p. 7.

" aſſent and belief of all perſons who came to be " baptized[a]."

Now, to return to the doctrine of the Trinity, it is very certain, that that always made either the whole, or the principal part of the firſt creeds: and therefore in every view, and upon all hypotheſes, it muſt have been looked upon as a prime verity, a fundamental doctrine of chriſtianity. But it may be pleaded perhaps (as indeed it has been pleaded of old time[b], as well as ſince) that the ancient creeds are not explicit as to the doctrine of the Trinity, in the commonly received ſenſe. To which the anſwer, in ſhort, is this: that though all the ancient creeds are not equally explicit in that doctrine (and good reaſons may be aſſigned why they are not) yet even thoſe which are leaſt explicit, do however contain the main doctrine briefly wrapped up, provided they are but interpreted according to the real meaning and intent of the compilers, as they ought to be.

1. I ſay, firſt, that all the ancient creeds are not equally explicit; for which good reaſons may be aſſigned, as ſhall be ſeen preſently. Some of the early creeds are very full and explicit in the doctrine, conſidering the time when they were made, long before the trinitarian controverſy was come to any ſuch height as it grew

[a] Critical Hiſtory of the Apoſtles Creed, p. 38.

[b] See Auſtin de Fide et Symbolo, C. i. p. 151. Tom. vi. Bened. edit.

Fulgentius in Fragment. 36, p. 632. Edit. Paris.

grew up to afterwards. The creed of Jeruſalem preſerved by Cyril, (the moſt[a] ancient perhaps of any now extant) is very expreſs for the divinity of God the Son, in theſe words: "And in "one Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the only begotten Son "of God, true God begotten of the Father be-"fore all ages; by whom all things were made[b]." Expreſſions which ſeem directly pointed at the Cerinthians, and others, who in the earlieſt times oppoſed the divinity of Chriſt[c].

There is a creed, or fragment of a creed, in Irenæus, which plainly enough intimates the real and proper divinity both of the Son and Holy Ghoſt. I ſhall cite ſuch parts of it as are moſt to our purpoſe. "There is one God omni-"potent, who made all things (out of nothing) "by his word—not by angels or by powers ſe-"parate from his own mind; for the God of all "needs nothing, but by his own word and ſpirit, "makes, orders, and governs all things, and "gives being to all[d]." Here the reader will obſerve, that the Word and Spirit, the Son and the Holy Ghoſt are manifeſtly diſtinguiſhed from all

[a] Bull Judic. Eccleſ. C. vi. No. 5. p. 325.
Toutee. in Cyrill. Hieroſol. p. 82.

[b] Καὶ εἰς ἕνα κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν, τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ μονογενῆ, τὸν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς γεννηθέντα θεὸν ἀληθινὸν πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων. δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα ἐγένετο. Cyril. Hieroſol. p. 159. Conf. 114, 137, 149.

[c] Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. vi. N. 16. p. 330.

[d] Unus Deus omnipotens qui omnia condidit per verbum ſuum —non per angelos, neque per virtutes abſciſſas ab ejus ſententiâ; nihil enim indiget omnium Deus: ſed per Verbum et Spiritum ſuum omnia faciens, et diſponens, et gubernans, et omnibus eſſe præſtans, Iren. L. i. C. xxii. p. 98. Bened. edit.

all creatures, from all the things made: and it is the known doctrine of Irenæus, that the Word and Spirit are the very ſelf of the Father[p] in a qualified ſenſe, reckoned to him, included in him. But let the reader, who deſires fuller ſatisfaction, take along with him Mr.[q] Alexander's excellent obſervations upon this and two or three more the like places of Irenæus, and he will find how ſtrong an atteſtation they amount to, to prove that the doctrine of the Trinity, as now received, was then looked upon as the ſummary and ground work of all that chriſtians believed. There is another creed of Irenæus, wherein the divinity of Chriſt, the doctrine of God incarnate, is expreſſed in ſtrong terms. "Chriſtum Jeſum Dei Filium: qui propter eminentiſſimam erga figmentum ſuum dilectionem, eam quæ eſſet ex virgine generationem ſuſtinuit, ipſe per ſe hominem adunans Deo, &c." Iren. L. iii. C. 4.

There is a like creed in Tertullian, fully expreſſing the divinity of God the Son, and obliquely intimating the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt; which however is known to be Tertullian's expreſs doctrine elſewhere, in more places than one[r]. His creed runs thus.

"We

[p] Fecit ea per ſemetipſum, hoc eſt, per Verbum et Sapientiam ſuam: adeſt enim ei ſemper Verbum et Sapientia, filius et ſpiritus, per quos, et in quibus, omnia libere et ſponte fecit, p. 253.

Fecit ea per ſemetipſum, hoc eſt per Verbum et Sapientiam ſuam, p. 163.

[q] Alexander's Eſſay on Irenæus, p. 19. Printed for J. Clark and R. Hett, 1727.

[r] Tertul. contr. Prax. C. ix, xiii, xxx.

"We believe in one God, but under this diſ-
"penſation, which we call the œconomy, that
"the one God hath a Son, which is his Word,
"who proceeded from him, by whom all things
"were made. He was ſent from the Father to
"the virgin, and was born of her, both God
"and man, Son of man, and Son of God—
"who afterwards, according to his promiſe, ſent
"from the Father the Holy Ghoſt, the Com-
"forter, the ſanctifier of the faith of thoſe who
"believe in the Father and the Son, and the
"Holy Ghoſt. This is the rule which has come
"down to us from the beginning of the goſ-
"pel[a]."

In the next century, we have the famous creed of Gregory Biſhop of Neocæſarea, commonly called Thaumaturgus, on the account of the many miracles which God wrought by him. The creed is as expreſs and explicit as poſſible for the doctrine of the Trinity, drawn up probably for the obviating all extremes of that time, whether of Samoſatenians, or Sabellians. Some have queſtioned the genuineneſs of it, but without ſufficient

[a] Unicum quidem Deum credimus, ſub hâc tamen diſpenſatione, quam οἰκονομίαν dicimus, ut unici Dei ſit et Filius, Sermo ipſius, qui ex ipſo proceſſerit, per quem omnia facta ſunt, et ſine quo factum eſt nihil. Hunc miſſum a Patre in virginem, et ex ea natum hominem et Deum, filium hominis et filium Dei, et cognominatum Jeſum Chriſtum.—Qui exinde miſerit, ſecundum promiſſionem ſuam, a Patre Spiritum Sanctum, paracletum, ſanctificatorem fidei eorum qui credunt in Patrem et Filium et Spiritum Sanctum. Hanc regulam ab initio evangelii decucurriſſe, &c. Tert. adv. Prax. C. 2. p. 5, 6. Welchman edit.

ſufficient cauſe[a]. I ſhall here ſet it down at full length, as follows:

" There is one God, Father of the living " Word, the ſubſtantial wiſdom, and power, and " eternal expreſs image: perfect parent of one " perfect, Father of the only begotten Son. " There is one Lord, one of one, God of God, " the expreſs character and image of the God- " head, the effective Word, the Wiſdom that " graſps the ſyſtem of the univerſe, and the " power that made every creature, true Son of " the true Father, inviſible of inviſible, incor- " ruptible of incorruptible, immortal of im- " mortal, and eternal of eternal. And there is " one Holy Ghoſt, having his ſubſiſtence from " God, and ſhining forth by the Son, [viz. to " mankind] perfect image of the perfect Son, " life cauſal of all living, the holy fountain, eſ- " ſential ſanctity, author of all ſanctification: in " whom God the Father is manifeſted, who is " above all, and in all, and God the Son who " is through all. A perfect Trinity, undivided, " unſeparated in glory, eternity and dominion. " There is therefore nothing created or ſervile " in this Trinity, nothing adventitious, that once " was not, and came in after: for the Father " was never without the Son, nor the Son with- " out

[a] The genuineneſs of the Creed is maintained by Biſhop Bull, Defen. F. N. ſect. ii. C. 12. p. 137.
Fabricius B. Gr. Vol. v. p. 249. opp. Hippol. Vol ii p. 224.
Dr. Berriman's Hiſtorical Account, p. 138, &c.
Mr. Abr. Taylor, True Script. Doctrine, p. 128, &c.

" out the Spirit, but this Trinity abides the " ſame, unchangeable and invariable for ever[u]." This is the ſo much celebrated creed, of which ſome ſtories have been told more than we are bound to believe, by Gregory Nyſſen: but miſreport in circumſtances do not invalidate the main thing. I have encloſed a ſmall part of it within brackets, looking upon it as a marginal gloſs, made by ſome ignorant ſcioliſt, and afterwards foiſted into the text. I owe the obſervation to Le Quien, who has confirmed it with ſubſtantial reaſons[w], in his edition of Damaſcen.

If it ſhould now be aſked, why other creeds, elder than this, ſhould not be equally explicit, as to the doctrine of the Trinity, or why the weſtern formularies were not as minute and expreſs, as ſome of the eaſtern; the anſwer is ſhort and eaſy: there was not the ſame occaſion. Hereſies were more or leſs prevalent at

[u] Εἷς θεὸς, πατὴρ λόγυ ζῶντος, σοφίας ὑφιςώσης, καὶ δυνάμεως, καὶ χαρακτῆρος ἀϊδίυ· τέλειος τελείυ γεννήτωρ, πατὴρ υἱῦ μονογενῦς, εἷς κύριος, μόνος ἐκ μόνυ, θεὸς ἐκ θεῦ· ὁ χαρακτὴρ καὶ εἰκὼν τῆς θεότητος, λόγος ἐνεργὴς, σοφία τῆς τῶν ὅλων συςάσεως περιεκτικὴ, καὶ δύναμις τῆς ὅλης κτίσεως ποιητικὴ, υἱὸς ἀληθινὸς ἀληθινῦ πατρὸς, ἀόρατος ἀοράτυ, καὶ ἄφθαρτος ἀφθάρτυ, καὶ ἀθάνατος ἀθανάτυ, καὶ ἀΐδιος ἀϊδίυ. Καὶ ἓν πνεῦμα ἅγιον, ἐκ θεῦ τὴν ὕπαρξιν ἔχον, καὶ δι υἱῦ πεφηνῶς, [δηλαδὴ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις] εἰκὼν τῦ υἱῦ τελείυ τελεία, ζωὴ ζώντων αἰτία, πηγὴ ἁγία, ἁγιότης ἁγιασμῦ χορηγὸς, ἐν ᾧ φανερῦται θεὸς ὁ πατὴρ ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων καὶ ἐν πᾶσι καὶ θεὸς ὁ υἱὸς ὁ διὰ πάντων. Τριὰς τελεία, δόξῃ καὶ ἀϊδιότητι καὶ βασιλείᾳ μὴ μεριζομένη μηδὲ ἀπαλλοτριουμένη· ὥτε ἓν κτιςόν τι ἢ δῦλον ἐν τῇ τριάδι, ὥτε ἐπείσακτόν τι, ὡς πρότερον μὲν ὐκ ὑπάρχον, ὕςερον δὲ ἐπεισελθόν. ὥτε ὖν ἐνέλιπέ ποτε υἱὸς πατρὶ, ὥτε υἱῷ πνεῦμα, αλλ' ἄτρεπτος καὶ ἀναλλοίωτος ἡ αὐτὴ τριὰς ἀεί.

Gregor. Thaumaturgi ſymbolum apud Gregor. Nyſſen. in vit. Gregor. opp. Tom. ii. p. 978, 979.

[w] Mich. le Quien. in Diſſertat. Damaſcen. Tom. i. p. 2.

at different times, and in different places: and creeds varied accordingly. The eaſt was more infeſted with them, than the weſt: and therefore the eaſtern creeds were larger and more explicit, generally, than the weſtern. And when ſome churches had formed their creeds, and made it cuſtomary for the catechumens to recite them publicly, they might not afterwards think it proper to alter the forms which the people had long been uſed, without the greateſt neceſſity. Such is Ruffinus's account of this matter[x]. And I may add, that there was no abſolute neceſſity of enlarging the baptiſmal creeds as often as hereſies aroſe in the church; becauſe the defects of the ſhorter creeds might be competently ſupplied another way; namely, by very particular inſtructions and cautions given to the candidates for baptiſm, in the catechetical lectures contrived for that purpoſe: of which I have treated ſufficiently elſewhere[y], and need not here repeat.

2. But I am further to obſerve, that even thoſe ſhorter creeds, ſuch particularly as the Roman,

[x] In diverſis eccleſiis, aliqua in his verbis inveniuntur adjecta: in eccleſiâ tamen urbis Romæ hoc non deprehenditur factum. Quod ego propterea eſſe arbitror, quod neque hæreſis ulla illic ſumſit exordium; et mos ibi ſervatur antiquus, eos qui gratiam baptiſmi ſuſcepturi ſunt, publicè, id eſt, fidelium populo audienti ſymbolum reddere, et utique adjectionem unius ſaltem ſermonis eorum qui proceſſerunt in fide non admittit auditus. In cæteris autem locis, quantum intelligi datur, propter nonnullos hæreticos addita quædam videntur, per quæ novellæ doctrinæ ſenſus crederetur excludi. Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 17. Edit. Ox.
Conf. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 312.

[y] Sermons, p. 322, &c.

Roman, though not ſo explicit in the article of the Trinity as the eaſtern creeds, do yet contain the ſum and ſubſtance of the doctrine in full and ſtrong terms; provided only, that they be interpreted according to the true and certain meaning of the compilers, as they ought to be. The creeds of the church ought moſt certainly to be interpreted according to the mind of the church, and not by any after thoughts of heretics[z]. For though the ſcripture, properly, is the rule for receiving any creed, or any doctrine, yet it is not the rule of interpretation; but words, phraſes and formularies muſt be interpreted according to their received uſe, and the known ſenſe of the compilers and impoſers[a]. The very judicious author of the Critical hiſtory has expreſſed the ſame ſentiments very fully and clearly, as follows: "Although nothing contained there-"in, muſt be believed any farther than it "agrees with the holy ſcriptures, yet the in-"tended ſenſe of the greateſt part thereof is not "to be fetched from thence, but from the wri-"tings of the fathers, and from thoſe hereſies "againſt whom it (the creed) was deſigned: "which

[z] Quid refert ſi quis heſternus hæreticus verba aliter explicari poſſe contendat? Symbola certe eccleſiæ ex ipſo eccleſiæ ſenſu, non ex hæreticorum cerebello exponenda ſint. Quod poſterius ſi fieret, Deum immortalem! quam cito, ex omnibus fidei noſtræ articulis, ne unus quidem nobis ſatis ſanus atque integer relinqueretur. Symbola eccleſiæ non tenet qui aliter quam eccleſia intelligit. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 322.

[a] See the caſe of Arian ſubſciption conſidered, p. 19, 20. Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Expoſition of the Catechiſm, p. 25. Edit. 3d.

" which expreſſion may, at the firſt hearing, " be perhaps eſteemed by ſome too haſty and in- " conſiderate: but the nature of the thing, well " reflected on, makes it evident and beyond con- " tradiction. And if the authority of others " before me will be more valued, and better re- " ceived, it will be no difficult taſk to produce " ſeveral who have affirmed the ſame thing. " But at preſent, I ſhall content myſelf with the " teſtimony of Monſieur Jurieu, a French divine " now living, who writes in expreſs terms, that " for his part, he is perſuaded, that we muſt not " ſeek the ſenſe of the articles of the apoſtles " creed in the ſcriptures, but in the intention of " thoſe that compoſed it[a]."

From what has been ſaid, it ought to be admitted as a clear caſe, or a ruled point that the creeds of the church ſhould be interpreted according to the mind of the church; and the mind of the church is to be learned chiefly from the writings of the fathers. And while we proceed by this rule, it is manifeſt that the ancient creeds, whether of the larger or ſhorter kind, do expreſs the doctrine of the Trinity, as commonly received at this day. The Roman creed for inſtance, even in its ſhorter form, (as it ſtood in and before the fourth century) fully expreſſes the true and proper divinity of Chriſt; indirectly, in calling the firſt perſon Father, and directly in calling

[a] Critical Hiſtory of the Apoſtle's Creed, p. 42. Edit. 4th.

calling the ſecond perſon Only Son. The very name of Father, applied in the creed to the firſt perſon, intimates the relation he bears to a Son, of the ſame nature with him, exiſting of him, and from him and with him. This is an obſervation frequently occuring in the poſtnicene writers, who derived it from the more early fathers, as I ſhall make appear preſently. Fulgentius argues, that the divinity of the Son is ſufficiently intimated in the creed, by the firſt article's acknowledging God to be Father; inaſmuch as Father and Son muſt be allowed to be of the ſame nature, and equal in all eſſential perfections[a]. Ruffinus, before him, argues in like manner, and ſo interprets the firſt article of the creed[b]. Hilary, before them both, expreſſes the ſame thought more than once, and inſiſts upon it as of great weight[c]. The Greek writers are full

[a] Cum enim quiſque ſe dicet credere in Deum Patrem omnipotentem, hoc ipſum quod in Deum Patrem dicit, ſicut in eo veritatem naturalis divinitatis, ita veritatem naturalis quoque paternitatis, et ex hac veritatem eriam naturalis generationis oſtendit. —Totum igitur in ſe habet illa generatio divina quicquid in ſe habet Dei Patris æterna ſubſtantia. Proinde ſufficiebat ut diceretur de Patre ſolo, quicquid æqualiter intelligendum eſſet de Filio: Pater enim ſic omnipotentem filium genuit, ſicut eſt ipſe Pater omnipotens.—Omnia igitur quæ Deo Patri dantur in ſymbolo, ipſo uno filii nomine, naturaliter tribuuntur et filio.

Fulgent. Fragment. xxxvi. p. 652.

[b] Patrem cum audis, filii intellige Patrem, qui filius ſupradictæ ſit imago ſubſtantiæ.—Hoc ergo ipſo nomine quo Deus ipſe Pater appellatur, cum Patre pariter ſubſiſtere etiam filius demonſtratur.—Eſt ergo Deus Pater verus tanquam veritatis Pater, non extrinſecus creans, ſed ex eo quod ipſe eſt, filium generans, &c. Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 18. Ed. Ox.

[c] Cum Patris nomen auditur, nunquid natura filii non continetur in nomine?—neque enim filius eſt cui alia ac diſſimilis erit

a Patre

full of the ſame notion, aſſerting God to be a Father, and from that principle inferring the coequality and proper divinity of Chriſt his Son. Gregory Nyſſen, in his firſt oration againſt Eunomius, expreſſes the thing thus[d]: "He ſays, there "is one only God Almighty: if he means a "Father under the name of Almighty, he ſays "the ſame that we do, and nothing different; "but if he intends it of an Almighty who is not "a Father, he may preach up circumciſion if he "pleaſes, along with his other Jewiſh tenets. "The faith of chriſtians looks to a Father. The "Father indeed is all; he is moſt High, Al-"mighty, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords: "whatever titles found high or great, they be-"long to the Father; and all things that are "the Father's belong to the Son. Allow but "this and we admit the other." To the ſame purpoſe

a Patre ſubſtantia, Hilar. de Trin. p. 789. Eccleſiæ fides ſolum verum Deum Patrem confeſſa, confitetur et Chriſtum.—Per id enim Chriſtum confeſſa Deum verum eſt, quod ſolum verum Deum confeſſa ſit Patrem.—Non enim unigenito Deo naturæ demutationem naturalis nativitas intulit: nec qui ex ſubſiſtente Deo ſecundum divinæ generationis naturam Deus ſubſiſtit, ab eo qui ſolus verus Deus eſt, ſeparabilis eſt veritate naturæ, p. 1006. Conf. 860, 938, 1163. Ed. Benedict.

[d] Εἷς γάρ ἐστι, φησὶ, καὶ μόνος θεὸς παντοκράτωρ. εἰ μὲν ὃν τὸν πατέρα διὰ τῆς τῦ παντοκράτορος προσηγορίας ἐνδείκνυται, ἡμετερον λέγει τὸν λόγον, καὶ ὐκ ἀλλότριον· εἰ δὲ ἄλλον τινὰ παρὰ τὸν πατέρα νοεῖ παντοκράτορα, καὶ τὴν περιτομὴν εἰ δοκεῖ κηρυσσέτω, ὁ τῶν δογμάτων τῶν Ἰουδαικῶν προστάτης· τῶν γὰρ χριστιανῶν ἡ πίστις πρὸς τὸν πατέρα βλέπει. Πάντα δέ ἐστιν ὁ πατήρ· ὕψιστος, παντοκράτωρ, βασιλεὺς τῶν βασιλευόντων, κύριος τῶν κυριευόντων, καὶ πάντα ὅσα τῆς ὑψηλῆς ἔχεται σημασίας, τῦ πατρός ἐστιν ἴδια· τὰ δὲ τῦ πατρὸς τῦ υἱῦ ἐστι πάντα ὥστε τύτῳ ὄντος, κακεῖνα διεχόμεθα, κ. τ. λ. Gregor. Nyſſen. Orat. 1. p. 15.

purpoſe ſpeaks Athanaſius, that the profeſſing our belief in God, as a Father, is at the ſame time acknowledging the divinity of the Son[g]. And the like is obſerved by Cyril of Jeruſalem in his expoſition of the firſt article of the creed[h].

The authors which I have cited, and to which more might be added[i], are all poſtnicenes, but they very well underſtood the true and genuine principles of their catholic predeceſſors, and are ſo many preſumptive evidences of the doctrine of the antenicene church, when, though writing on different occaſions, and in diſtant places, they fall in ſo unanimouſly with the ſame way of thinking. Beſides, teſtimonies may be cited from the antinicene writers themſelves, expreſſing the ſame notion. Dionyſius of Alexandria, who flouriſhed about the middle of the third century, intimates the ſame thing thus: "The "Father being eternal, the Son muſt be eter- "nal too, Light of Light. — The names by "me mentioned are undivided and inſepa- "rable: when I named the Father, before I "mentioned the Son, I ſignified the Son in "the Father. —— If any of my falſe accu- "ſers

[g] Ὁ δὲ τὸν Θεὸν πατέρα λέγων, εὐθὺς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ τὸν υἱὸν σημαίνει, καὶ ἐκ ἀγνοήσει ὅτι υἱοῦ ὄντος, διὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τὰ γινόμενα ἐκτίσθη πάντα. Athanaſ. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 236. Benedict.

[h] Πατέρα τὸν Θεὸν, ὀνομάσαμεν, ἵνα ἅμα τῷ νοεῖν πατέρα, νόησομεν καὶ τὸν υἱόν· υἱὸς γὰρ καὶ πατρὸς οὐδέν ἐστι μεταξὺ τῶν ὄντων. Cyril. Hieroſol. Catech. vii. N. 3. cont. Catch. viii. N. 1.

[i] See others cited, and referred to in the Critical Hiſtory of the Apoſtle's Creed, p. 77, 78.

" ſers ſuſpect, that becauſe I called God creator " and former of all things, I made him creator " of Chriſt, let him conſider, that I before ſtiled " him Father, and ſo the Son was included in " Him[a], &c." Here we may obſerve, how this early and excellent writer argues from the very name and relation of Father, that Chriſt could not be a creature, in like manner as the poſtnicene writers (before cited) argue from the ſame title applied to the firſt perſon in the creed. So that if we interpret the creed according to the ſtrict ſenſe which the ancients had of the term Father, that very title indirectly aſſerts the divinity of Chriſt, ſince God is thereby underſtood to be the Father of Chriſt[b], and not his creator, as of angels or men.

But the ſame thing will be more directly proved from the title of Son, or only Son applied to the ſecond perſon of the Trinity, in the creed: for all the fathers, both antenicene and poſtnicene, conſtantly underſtood that title as applied to Chriſt, to be expreſſive of his real and proper divinity, of his partaking of the ſame

[a] Ὄντος ἐν αἰωνίῳ τῷ πατρὸς, αἰώνιος ὁ υἱός ἐστι, φῶς ἐκ φωτὸς ὤν: —τῶν ὑπ' ἐμοῦ λεχθέντων ὀνομάτων ἕκαστον ἀχώριστόν ἐστι καὶ ἀδιαίρετον τοῦ πλησίον. Πατέρα εἶπον, καὶ πρὶν ἐπαγάγω τὸν υἱὸν ἐσήμανα καὶ τοῦτον ἐν τῷ πατρί.—Ἐαν δέ τις τῶν συκοφαντῶν ἐπειδὰν τῶν ἁπάντων ποιητὴν τὸν θεὸν καὶ δημιουργὸν εἶπον, οἴηταί με καὶ τοῦ χριστοῦ λέγειν, ἀκουσάτω μου πρότερον πατέρα φήσαντος αὐτὸν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ ὁ υἱὸς προσγέγραπται. Dionyſ. Alex. apud Anathaſ. de Sententia Dionyſii. p. 254, 257.

[b] Compare the Creed of Gregory Thaumaturgus, cited above, where the term Father is interpreted in the ſame high ſenſe, and as implying the real and eſſential divinity of the Son.

ſame nature and godhead with the Father, whoſe only Son he is. Biſhop Bull, in reply to Epiſcopius, has largely inſiſted upon this argument, proving that the title of μονογενὴς, only begotten, or only Son, in the creed, denotes the real and eternal divinity of Chriſt. He proves it, 1. From ſuch places of ſcripture where that title is applied to Chriſt. 2. From the ſtrict force and propriety of the expreſſion itſelf. 3. From the order and texture of the creed. 4. From the univerſal and conſtant interpretation of the ancients[c]. I may refer to Biſhop Bull and others that have come after him, for proof that the title of Son of God, or only begotten Son, in ſcripture, cannot reaſonably be underſtood either of our Lord's miraculous conception by the Holy Ghoſt, or of his Meſſiahſhip, or of his being the firſt begotten from the dead, or of his receiving all power, and his being *appointed Heir* of all things: none of theſe circumſtances ſingly conſidered, nor all together, will be ſufficient to account for the title of *only Son*, or *only Begotten*; but there is a neceſſity of looking higher up to the pre-exiſtent and divine nature of the *Word*, who was in the

[c] In ſymbolo Romano Chriſtum dici Dei Filium unicum, ſive unigenitum (τὸν μονογενῆ) reſpectu divinæ ſuæ naturæ, qua non modo ante Mariam, ſed etiam ante omnia ſæcula ex et cum Deo Patre extitit probatu facile eſt: 1. Ex locis ſcripturæ ubi vox μονο, ενὴς reperitur Chriſto tributa. 2. Ex vi et proprietate ipſius vocis. 3. Ex ordine et contextu verborum in ſymbolo ipſo. 4. Denique ex conſtante ac perpetuo Catholicæ Eccleſiæ ſenſu atque interpretatione. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. p. 313.

the beginning *with God*, and was himſelf *very God*, before the creation, and from all eternity[d]. Angels and men have been called Sons of God, in an improper and metaphorical ſenſe; but they have never been ſtiled only begotten, nor indeed ſons in any ſuch emphatical and diſtinguiſhing manner as Chriſt is. They are ſons by adoption, or faint reſemblance: He is truly, properly and eminently Son of God, and therefore God, as every ſon of man is therefore truly man[e]. Novatian ſpeaks the ſenſe of all the antenicene fathers in that article: I forbear to produce their teſtimonies here, having done it elſewhere[f]: there is not a more noted principle or maxim among the earlieſt writers of the church than this, that Chriſt is truly, properly, eſſentially God, becauſe he is properly Son of God. The ſum then is, that the apoſtles creed, in ſtiling Chriſt *only Son*, or *only begotten*, has expreſſed his coeternal divinity in ſuch terms as were conſtantly, and univerſally underſtood by the ancient churches to carry that idea with them. Therefore

[d] See Bull. Judic. C. v. p. 313.—320.
Dr. Sherlock's Scripture Proofs of our Saviour's Divinity, p. 161.—183.
Remarks on Dr. Clarke's Expoſition of the Catechiſm, p. 44.—48.

[e] Ut enim præſcripſit ipſa natura hominem credendum eſſe, qui ex homine ſit; ita eadem natura præſcribit et Deum credendum eſſe, qui ex Deo ſit: ne ſi non et Deus fuerit cum ex Deo ſit, jam nec homo ſit licet ex homine fuerit, Novat. C. xi. p. 34. Edit. Welchm.

[f] Sermons, p. 329.

fore the very learned Biſhop Stillingfleet had good reaſon to ſay, "That although the Apoſtles creed does not in expreſs words declare "the divinity of the three perſons in the unity "of the divine eſſence; yet taking the ſenſe of "thoſe articles as the chriſtian church underſtood them from the apoſtles times, then we "have as full and clear evidence of this doctrine, as we have that we received the ſcriptures from them[g]." The reſult of what has been ſaid under the preſent article, is, that whether we take the longer or the ſhorter creeds of the ancient churches, whether thoſe that are moſt explicit or thoſe that are leaſt ſo, all of them contained the doctrine of the Trinity, either as their whole ſubject matter, or as their principal part: and therefore ſo far as the creeds of the ancient church can be of uſe to ſhew that any point of doctrine was judged important, or fundamental, we have full proof that the doctrine we are ſpeaking of, was looked upon as an eſſential of chriſtianity in the beſt and pureſt ages.

It muſt indeed be owned, that it never was the intention of creeds to furniſh out any compleat catalogue of fundamentals[h], and ſo it would be very wrong to argue and infer negatively, that ſuch an article was not in this or in that creed, and therefore was not judged a fundamental

g Stillingfleet on the Trinity, C. ix. p. 229.

h See my Sermons, p. 321.—326.
Critical Hiſtory of the Athanaſian Creed, p. 285, &c. ſecond Edit.

fundamental by the compilers (for by that rule, neither the article of God's being *Maker of heaven and earth*, nor that of *Life everlaſting* would be fundamental, having both been omitted in the old Roman creed) but it may be right enough to argue and infer poſitively, that ſuch an article was inſerted in the creeds, and was therefore judged to be fundamental, or of great importance; ſince none could be admitted to chriſtian baptiſm, in ſuch or ſuch places, in the early times, without an open and explicit profeſſion of it. So much for the head of creeds.

II. Another way of knowing the ſentiments of the ancient church, in relation to the neceſſity of believing the doctrine of the Trinity, is to obſerve what cenſures were paſſed upon the open impugners of it. For, if it was accounted hereſy, pernicious and deadly hereſy, to oppoſe that doctrine, in whole or in part, then it is plain, that the doctrine was judged important, was looked upon as an eſſential of the goſpel faith. Among the impugners of that doctrine, in the article of Chriſt's divinity, have been commonly reckoned theſe ſeven. 1. Cerinthus, 2. Ebion, 3. Theodotus, 4. Artemon, 5. Beryllus, 6. Paul of Samoſata, 7. Arius. Of whom I ſhall treat in their order, as briefly as may be conſiſtent with perſpicuity.

A. D. 60. *Cerinthus.*

Cerinthus lived in the apoſtolic age, was an impugner of our Lord's divinity, and was condemned for it, probably, by St. John himſelf, and by the whole church at that time and after: therefore the article of Chriſt's divinity was then looked upon as a fundamental article. This is the ſum of what I maintain under this head: I now come to the diſtinct proof of the ſeveral particulars.

1. That Cerinthus lived in the apoſtolic age, is a fact ſo well atteſted by great variety of ancient evidences, (ſome of which will come up preſently) that it ought to paſs for a certain and manifeſt truth. Yet a late learned foreigner[i], having a private hypotheſis to ſerve, has called the fact in queſtion, as ſome few others beſides him have done[k]. His reaſons have been conſidered, and anſwered by learned hands[l]; to whom I refer the reader, rather than enter into a needleſs diſpute. Irenæus is an authority ſo early, and ſo expreſs for Cerinthus's[m] flonriſhing in St. John's time, that it is alone ſufficient to remove all doubt of the fact. Indeed Epiphanius[n] and Philaſtrius

[i] Frideric. Adolph. Lampe. in Comment. in S. Johan. Proleg. L. ii. C. 3. p. 181, &c.

[k] Vid. Buddeus in Eccleſ. Apoſt. p. 411.

[l] Taylor's true Scripure Doctrine, p. 263. Buddeus Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 412.—419.

[m] Irenæus, L. iii. C. 3. 11.

[n] Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxviii. N. 2. p. 111.

Philaſtrius[o] place Cerinthus ſo high in the apoſtolic age, that they ſuppoſe him to have given great diſturbance to St. Peter and St. Paul, and to have occaſioned the calling of the firſt council at Jeruſalem, A. D. 49. recorded in the Acts[p]. But there is reaſon to ſuſpect the truth of that report[q], and therefore I am content to place Cerinthus ſome years lower, but early enough to have ſpread his hereſies before St. John wrote his epiſtles, and even before St. Paul wrote ſome of his.

2. Cerinthus held many errors: but the only one I am concerned to take notice of, is his denying the divinity of Chriſt. That he did ſo, is plainly aſſerted by the ancient author of the Appendix to Tertullian's book of Preſcription[r]. But Irenæus, a more early, and a more accurate writer, will give us the trueſt and moſt diſtinct account of what Cerinthus held with reſpect to the divinity of our bleſſed Lord. The ſum of his hereſy in that point was, that Jeſus, and Chriſt were two perſons: Jeſus a mere man conceived in the natural way, of Joſeph and Mary; and Chriſt a celeſtial ſpirit, which deſcended from above, and reſided in the man Jeſus, not conſtantly, but occaſionally, from his baptiſm to his crucifixion.

[o] Philaſtr. Hæreſ. xxxvi. p. 80. Edit. Fabric.

[p] Acts v.

[q] Vid. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 113, 196.

[r] Cerinthus—— Chriſtum ex ſemine Joſeph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo ſine divinitate contendens. Tertul. de Præſcript. C. lxviii. p. 221. Rigalt.

crucifixion[s]. Whatever view we take this doctrine of Cerinthus in, it is denying the proper divinity of our bleſſed Lord. The man Jeſus, upon his principles, could not be divine at all, having no conſtant, or perſonal union with what deſcended from above: and as to that ſpiritual ſubſtance, called Chriſt, which was ſuppoſed, ſome time, to reſide in him, even that was not properly divine, according to Cerinthus. The moſt that he ſaid of it was, that it was ſpiritual, and impaſſible becauſe ſpiritual: he does not ſay, becauſe divine. He ſeparates him from the principality that is over all, that is to ſay, from God ſupreme, and therefore could not look upon him as properly divine. I may further obſerve, that his doctrine of the Logos, or Word, was, that he was Son, not of God ſupreme, but of the only begotten[t], one remove ſtill farther off from God moſt high. And ſince he thus diſtinguiſhed him from the only begotten, who was alone ſuppoſed to know the Father immediately, it is plain he could not look upon the Word as ſtrictly divine. Add to this, that

[s] Cerinthus autem quidam in Aſiâ—Jeſum ſubjecit, non ex virgine natum (impoſſibile enim hoc ei viſum eſt) fuiſſe autem eum Joſeph et Mariæ filium, ſimiliter ut reliqui omnes homines, et plus potuiſſe juſtitiâ et prudentiâ et ſapientiâ ab hominibus: et poſt baptiſmum deſcendiſſe in eum, ab eâ principalitate quæ eſt ſuper omnia, Chriſtum figurâ columbæ, et tunc annuntiaſſe incognitum Patrem, et virtutes perfeciſſe: in fine autem revolaſſe iterum Chriſtum de Jeſu, et Jeſum paſſum eſſe et reſurrexiſſe, Chriſtum autem impaſſibilem perſeveraſſe, exiſtentem ſpiritualem. Iren. L. i. C. 26. p. 105. Bened. Conf. Epiph. Hæreſ. xxviii. p. 110.

[t] Et initium quidem eſſe Monogenem, Logon autem verum filium unigeniti. Iren. L. iii. C. 11. p. 188.

that Epiphanius ſpeaking of ſome of the Ebionites (who were near allied to the Cerinthians, and borrowed much of their doctrine from them) ſays, that they ſuppoſed their Chriſt to have deſcended from heaven, being a Spirit firſt created of all, higher than the angels, and bearing rule over all; which afterwards aſſumed a body[u]. This deſcription of Chriſt from above, ſeems to anſwer pretty nearly to Cerinthus's notion of a ſpiritual ſubſtance, called Chriſt, ſo deſcending and reſiding in Jeſus; and is a confirmation of what I am pleading for, viz. That Cerinthus did not look upon Chriſt as divine (in any capacity) but as a creature only. So then, whether we conſider Cerinthus as making Jeſus a mere man, or as ſuppoſing the Chriſt (ſometimes reſiding in Jeſus) to be an inferior æon, produced in time, and the offſpring of ſilence[w], or in ſhort, a creature; either way he plainly impugned the true and proper divinity of Jeſus Chriſt.

3. The next thing to be conſidered is, what kind of reception ſuch his doctrine met with in the church of Chriſt. We have good reaſon to believe, that it was condemned as antichriſtian doctrine, by the biſhops of Aſia, and by

[u] Ἄλλοι δὲ ἐν αὐτοῖς λέγουσιν ἄνωθεν μὲν ὄντα, πρὸ πάντων δὲ κτισθέντα, πνεῦμα ὄντα, καὶ ὑπὲρ ἀγγέλους ὄντα, πάντων τε κυριεύοντα, καὶ χριστὸν λέγεσθαι, τὸν ἐκεῖσε δὲ αἰῶνα κεκληρῶσθαι. Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxx. C. 3. p. 127. Conf. Vitringa. obſervat. Sacr. L. v. C. 12. ſ. 7. p. 146. Edit. ult.

[w] See Biſhop Bull, Def. F. N. ſect. iii. C. 1. p. 160, et Greg. Nazianz. orat xxiii. p. 414.—

by St. John himſelf. Indeed our proofs of this matter are of the conjectural kind: but they are not without their weight, if they amount to rational preſumptions, or ſtrong probabilites. If it can be probably argued from external evidence, that St. John wrote his goſpel, or epiſtles, in direct oppoſition to the tenets of Cerinthus, and if the internal characters of his writings themſelves confirm the report; then both theſe circumſtances concurring in the ſame thing, will together amount to as fair a proof of what we pretend, as matters of this nature will generally admit of.

That St. John wrote his goſpel with a view to confute Cerinthus, among other falſe teachers, is atteſted firſt by Irenæus[x], who was a diſciple of Polycarp, and who flouriſhed within leſs than a century of St. John's time. He is very particular in the account, obſerving

[x] Hanc fidem annuncians Joannes domini diſcipulus, volens per evangelii annunciationem auferre eum qui a Cerintho inſeminatus erat hominibus errorem, et multo prius ab his qui dicuntur Nicolaitæ, qui ſunt vulſio ejus, quæ falsò cognominatur ſcientia, ut confunderet eos, et ſuaderet, quoniam unus Deus qui omnia fecit per verbum ſuum: et non, quemadmodum illi dicunt, alterum quidem fabricatorem, alium autem Patrem Domini; et alium quidem fabricatoris Filium, alterum vero de ſuperioribus Chriſtum, quem et impaſſibilem perſeveraſſe deſcendentem in Jeſum filium fabricatoris, et iterum revolaſſe in ſuum pleroma; et initium quidem eſſe Monogenem, Logon autem verum filium unigeniti; et eam conditionem, quæ eſt ſecundum nos, non a primo Deo factam, ſed a virtute aliquâ valde deorſum ſubjectâ, et abſciſsâ ab eorum communicatione, quæ ſunt inviſibilia et innominabilia: omnia igitur talia circumſcribere volens diſcipulus Domini, et regulam veritatis conſtituere in eccleſiâ,—ſic inchoavit in eâ, quæ eſt ſecundum evangelium, doctrinâ: in principio erat verbum, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. xi. p. 188.

ing what ſpecial errors of the ſame Cerinthus and others, the apoſtle had an eye to, in the penning of his goſpel.

Our next author to Irenæus, is Victorinus Petavionenſis, who flouriſhed about A. D. 290. He reports that the biſhops of Aſia, being alarmed at the pernicious doctrines then diſſeminated by Valentinus, Cerinthus, and Ebion, came in a body to St. John, importuning him to bear his teſtimony againſt them[y]. The author, probably, miſtakes in bringing in Valentinus ſo early: but that will not invalidate his report as to the other two, or as to the main thing. Some doubts have been raiſed about the genuineneſs of that treatiſe aſcribed to Victorinus: but Dr. Grabe ſeems to have well taken off the only material exception to it[z]: to him therefore I refer the reader.

Our next author is Jerome, who twice tells the ſame ſtory, with ſome particular circumſtances, not ſo plainly intimated elſewhere; once in his prologue to his commentaries on St. Matthew[a], and again in his book of Eccleſiaſtical

[y] Cum eſſent Valentinus, et Cerinthus, et Ebion, et cæteri ſcholæ ſatanæ diffuſi per orbem, convenerunt ad illum de finitimis provinciis omnes, et compulerunt ut ipſe teſtimonium ſcriberet. Victorin. in Apocalypſ. Bibl. PP. Tom. i. p. 576. alias Tom. iii. p. 418.

[z] Grabe Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 45.

[a] Johannes apoſtolus et evangeliſta——quum eſſet in Aſiâ, et jam tunc hæreticorum ſemina pullularent Cerinthi, Ebionis, et cæterorum qui negant Chriſtum in carne veniſſe (quos et ipſe in epiſtolâ ſuâ antichriſtos vocat, et apoſtolus Paulus frequenter percutit) coactus eſt ab omnibus pene tunc Aſiæ epiſcopis, et multarum

ſiaſtical writers[b]. He does not ſay, in particular, from whence he had his accounts: but he was a learned man, converſant in books, and he intimates that he had his intelligence from eccleſiaſtical memoirs.

Epiphanius of the ſame time, teſtifies more than once, that St. John wrote againſt Cerinthus and Ebion, who had taught that Chriſt was a mere man[c]. It is ſome confirmation of this, what Irenæus relates of St. John's meeting with Cerinthus at the bath (as I have before noted) and running from him with diſdain. It ſhews at leaſt, that St. John and he were contemporaries, and that the apoſtle well underſtood his principles, and deteſted them.

The main of the account may receive ſome farther confirmation from what Julian, the apoſtate emperor

multarum eccleſiarum legationibus, de divinitate ſalvatoris altius ſcribere, et ad ipſum, ut ita dicam, Dei Verbum, non tam audaci, quam felici temeritate prorumpere. Et eccleſiaſtica narrat hiſtoria, quum a fratribus cogeretur ut ſcriberet, ita facturum ſe reſpondiſſe, ſi indicto jejunio in commune omnes Deum precarentur: quo expleto, revelatione ſaturatus, in illud proœmium cœlo veniens eructavit: in principio erat verbum, &c. Hieronym. Prolog. in Matt. p. 3. opp. Tom. iv. Ed. Bened.

[b] Joannes, noviſſimus omnium ſcripſit evangelium rogatus ab Aſiæ epiſcopis, adverſus Cerinthum alioſque hæreticos, et maximè tunc Ebionitarum dogma conſurgens; qui aſſerunt Chriſtum ante Mariam non fuiſſe: unde et compulſus eſt divinam ejus nativitatem edicere. Hieronym. de viris illuſtrib. C. ix. p. 54, 55. Fabric.

[c] Ἔνθα γὰρ τὸν χριστὸν ἐκ παρατριβῆς ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον ἐκήρυττεν ὁ Ἐβίων καὶ ὁ Κήρινθος, καὶ οἱ ἀμφ' αὐτὸς, φημὶ δὲ ἐν τῇ Ασία, ἐκεῖ τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον ἀνέτειλε τῷ κόσμῳ ταύτην ἁγίαν βοτάνην, εἶτεν θάμνον τὴν ἀποδιώξασαν τὸν ὄφιν, καὶ λύσασαν τὴν τῆ Διαβόλω τυραννίδα. ἐκεῖ γὰρ ὁ ἅγιος Ιωάννης. κ. τ. λ. Epiphan. Hæreſ. li. 2. p. 423. Conf. p. 424. 433, 435. Hær. lxix. p. 747.

emperor, was pleaſed to obſerve (thirty years or more before St. Jerome) that John perceiving how that the perſuaſion of Chriſt's being God, prevailed mightily among the chriſtians diſperſed thorough many cities of Greece and Italy, did then take upon him to aſſert the ſame doctrine in his goſpel, with a view to humour them, and to get himſelf reputation[d]. Here then we have a plain confeſſion from a vehement adverſary, which confeſſion of his (ridicule and banter apart) amounts to this; that the generality of chriſtians, as early as the apoſtolic age, were exceedingly zealous for the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, and that St. John himſelf commended them for it, encouraging them in it, and wrote his goſpel to confirm it. Julian, very probably, had learned it from inconteſtible monuments of antiquity; and ſince he could not diſown the fact, he endeavoured, in his ludicrous way, to turn the whole into ridicule. He ſays nothing indeed of Cerinthus or Ebion, as he had no occaſion: but yet this ſtory of his, as he has told it, falls in with the other accounts in the main thing; for which reaſon I have mentioned it. Such is the external evidence we have to prove, that St. John, at the requeſt of the biſhops, and churches of that time, wrote his goſpel to eſtabliſh

[d] Ὁ χρηστὸς Ἰωάννης αἰσθόμενος ἤδη, πολὺ πλῆθος ἐαλωκὸς ἐν πολλαῖς τῶν Ἑλληνίδων καὶ Ἰταλιωτίδων πόλεων ὑπὸ τάυτης τῆς νόσου· ἀχθῶν δὲ, οἶμαι, καὶ τὰ μνήματα Πέτρου καὶ Παύλου, λάθρα μὲν, ἀχθῶν δὲ ὅμως αὐτὰ θεραπευόμενα, πρῶτος ἐτόλμησεν εἰπεῖν [τὸν Ἰησοῦν θεὸν] Julian apud Cyril. L. x. p. 327. Edit. Lipſ.

eſtabliſh the faith of chriſtians in our Lord's divinity, againſt Cerinthus and Ebion, or other falſe teachers who oppoſed it[e].

The truth of the fact will be much confirmed from the internal characters of St. John's writings: and this will fully appear by comparing his expreſſions with Cerinthus's tenets, obſerving, all the way, how aptly they anſwer in that reſpect, directly confronting and overturning the principles of that hereſiarch and his followers.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD. That is to ſay, at the creation of all things (ἐν ἀρχῇ, as in Geneſis) the word exiſted[f]; therefore he was before any creature; not only before Joſeph and Mary, but even before any ſuch created æon as Cerinthus had talked of, whether called the Word, or Chriſt.

AND THE WORD WAS WITH GOD. Not a ſeparate æon, inferior to God and diſtant from God (like to what Cerinthus ſuppoſed of the Demiurgus, the maker and framer of the world[g]) not eſtranged from God, but united to him, and

[e] The very learned Vitringa has objected to this account, as to ſome circumſtances. Obſerv. Sacr. L. v. C. x. ſect. 7, 8. But he is well anſwered by Buddeus, Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 419, &c.

[f] Δύναται μέν τοιγε τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς ὄνομα λαμβάνεσθαι καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ἀρχῆς, μανθανόντων ἡμῶν διὰ τῶν λεγομένων, ὅτι πρεσβύτερος ὁ λόγος τῶν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς γενομένων ἦν. Origen. Comment. in Joan. p. 50. Conf. Buddeus Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 430, 438. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. ii. ſ. 4. p. 294.

[g] Irenæus, L. iii. C. xi. p. 188. Lib. i. C. xxvi. p. 105. Pſeudo Tertullian de Præſcript. Hæret. Append. p. 221. Epiph. Hæreſ. xxviii. N. p. 110.

and abiding with him[h], while perſonally diſtinct from him.

AND THE WORD WAS GOD. Not a mere man, as Cerinthus aſſerted of Jeſus, not a creature, as Cerinthus imagined of Chriſt, or of the Word, but *very God*[i].

THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. This is reſuming what had been ſaid before after a kind of break, to connect it the more cloſely with the account of the creation (which the apoſtle was juſt going to mention) and to inculcate the more ſtrongly, againſt Cerinthus, that he *by whom all things were made* was no diſtant, inferior æon, eſtranged from God, and unacquainted with him, but one that had been always with the ſupreme Father.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM. By the Word. Not by an inferior demiurgus, not by any ſeparate powers, not by angels, (as the Cerinthians taught[k]) not by any creature creator, but

[h] Καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν· ὃ γὰρ ἐγένετο πρὸς τὸν θεόν· καὶ ταυτὸν ῥῆμα, τὸ ἦν, τῷ λόγῳ καταγορεῖται, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν, καὶ ὅτε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἦν, ἅτε τῆς ἀρχῆς χωριζόμενος, ἅτε τῷ πατρὸς ἀπολειπόμενος. Origin. in Joan. p. 44.

[i] Addit, et Deus erat Verbum; illud, non minus quam ipſum Patrem, verum ſummumque Deum eſſe ſignificans. Atque iſtud quidem Cerinthi commentis e diametro eſt oppoſitum, quippe qui per τὸν λόγον, ſive Chriſtum, equidem ſubſtantiam quandam Spiritualem eamque humanâ naturâ præſtantiorem, neutiquam autem ὑπόστασιν quandam divinam quæ et ipſa Deus eſſet, intelligebat. Buddei Eccleſ. Apoſtolica, p. 438.

[k] Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 3. L. v. C. 9. Auguſtin de Hæreſ. C. viii.

Ephan. Hæreſ. 28. 1. Philaſtr. Hær. 36. p. 77. Pſeudo Tertullian. Præſcript. C. 68. Damaſcen. Hær. 28.

but the Word himſelf, very God, and one with God[l].

AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE. Not the lower world only, but the upper world alſo; not the material and viſible world only, but the world of inviſibles, the celeſtial ſpirits, angels and archangels. They alſo were made by the ſame Word; for there was nothing made without him[m]. *By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, viſible and inviſible, whether they be thrones or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him*[n]. So writes St. Paul, the beſt interpreter what we have in St. John, as writing by the ſame ſpirit, and with the ſame views, and probably againſt the very ſame men. Indeed, there is not in the whole New Teſtament any thing of a more ſublime and exalted ſtrain, concerning the perſonal dignity of our bleſſed Lord

[l] *Omnia per illud* (Verbum) *facta ſunt:* commentis Cerinthianis eſt oppoſitum: non enim a fabricatore quodam mundi, a Deo primo diverſo, ſed a λόγῳ ὑποστατικῷ, qui et ipſe verus ſummuſque Deus ſit, mundum huncce et omnia quæ in eo ſunt, condita eſſe, verbis iſtis docet. Buddei Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 438. conf. Vitring. Obſerv. ſacr. L. v. C. 13. ſ. 4. p. 155.

[m] In eodem commate, contra eoſdem hæreticos addit, *et abſque eo factum eſt nihil.* Quæ verba, qui intentionem apoſtoli non attenderit, nihil aliud quam inanem ταυτολογίαν continere ſuſpicetur. Sed nimirum hæretici iſti (ut recte Grotius) alium volebant opificem eorum quæ cernimus, ſive mundi hujus aſpectabilis alios rerum inviſibilium, et quæ ſuper hunc mundum ſunt, in ſuoquemque pleromate: nihil igitur eorum quæ facta ſunt, ex operibus τῦ λόγυ excipit Joannes. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. ii. p. 204.

[n] Coloſ. i. 16. See my Sermons, p. 58—62.

Lord, than what we find in the firſt chapter to the Coloſſians, from the 15th to the 19th verſe incluſive; and in the ſecond, from verſe the ſecond to the tenth. Thoſe paſſages come the neareſt of any to St. John's divine proeme, and are only to be matched with it. It would be too great a digreſſion here, to ſhew how thoſe ſo emphatical expreſſions of St. Paul are all particularly fitted to confront the tenets of Cerinthus, as if choſen for that very purpoſe, and directly pointed at them: but the learned reader who is diſpoſed to examine into the fact, may conſult a very judicious foreigner, who has drawn that matter out at length, expounding what St. Paul has ſaid in thoſe two chapters, in a very clear and excellent manner, by the oppoſition which it carries in it all the way to the Cerinthian hereſy[f]. I return to St. John.

IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. The ſame Word was Life, the λόγος and ζωὴ, both one[g]. There was no occaſion therefore for ſubtilly diſtinguiſhing the Word and Life into two æons, as ſome did.

AND THE LIGHT SHINETH IN DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS COMETH NOT UPON IT‖. So I render the verſe, conformable to the rendering

[f] Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtolica. p. 468.—487.

[g] Hunc ipſum λόγον eſſe vitam hominis; otioſam innuens illorum ſubtilitatem, qui in ſyſtemate divinarum emanationum, ζωὴν vitam, a λόγῳ diſtinguebant, eidemque ſubordinabant. Vitringa in Prolog. Evangel. Johan. Obſerv. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 180.

‖ See Addenda. p. 505.

rendering of the ſame Greek verb, καταλαμβάνω, by our tranſlators, in another place of this ſame goſpel[h]. The apoſtle, as I conceive, in this fifth verſe of his firſt chapter, alludes to the prevailing error of the Gnoſtics, and of all that ſort of men[i]; who had adopted the ancient magian notion of a good God and evil God, the firſt called light, and the other darkneſs*; which two they ſuppoſed to be under perpetual ſtruggles, and obſtructed by each other. In oppoſition, probably, to thoſe magian principles, St. John here aſſerts, that the Word, the true Light, was much ſuperior to any ſuch pretended rival power. In him was no darkneſs at all[k]: no ſuch oppoſite power could come upon him, to obſtruct his purpoſes, or defeat his good and great deſigns.

HE WAS IN THE WORLD, AND THE WORLD HAD BEEN MADE BY HIM, BUT THE WORLD KNEW HIM NOT. So I tranſlate, for greater accuracy and perſpicuity; HE CAME UNTO HIS OWN, AND HIS OWN RECEIVED HIM NOT. Theſe two verſes manifeſtly confront ſeveral of the gnoſtic principles, viz. that the world was made by an inferior and evil god, an angel called Demiurgus; and that Chriſt came into another perſon's work, or province, not into

[h] John xii. 35. Vid. Bos. exercitat. in Johan. p. 54, 55.

[i] Vid. Vitringa Obſervat. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 136. Epiphanius ſpeaking of the gnoſticiſm of thoſe times, derives it in part from the perplexity which thoſe men were under, in the queſtion about the Origin of Evil. Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxiv. 6.

* See Addenda, p. 507.

[k] God is light, and in him is no darkneſs at all. 1 John i. 5.

into his own, when he manifeſted himſelf to the world[l]; and that he did not ſo manifeſt himſelf before his incarnation. Thoſe ſeveral errors ſeem to be directly pointed at, and confuted by what the evangeliſt has taught in thoſe two verſes[m]. But of the true interpretation of thoſe two verſes, I have treated more largely elſewhere[n].

AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH, became perſonally united with the man Jeſus; AND DWELT AMONG US, reſided conſtantly in the human nature ſo aſſumed. Very emphatical and pointed expreſſions, ſearching to the root of every hereſy almoſt of that time, ſo far as concerned the perſon of Chriſt: for none of them would admit the *Word made fleſh*, or *God made man*[o]. Such ſentiments agreed not with their vain philoſophy; they deemed

[l] Scilicet Cerinthi et aliorum omnium hæreticorum, qui mundi hujus conditorem a ſummo Deo ſeparabant, hæc fuit notiſſima ſententia, Chriſtum ſervatorem noſtrum a ſummâ omnium principalitate in hunc mundum veniſſe tanquam in alienum opus; idque ut homines a Dominio et ſervitute conditoris univerſi in neſcio quam libertatem (licentiam rectius dixeris) vindicaret. Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. C. ii. ſ. 4. p. 294. Conf. Iren. L iii. C. 11. et L. v. C. 18.

[m] Docet itaque ſemper illum in mundo fuiſſe, et a primo rerum ortu, et generis humani inſtauratione, ſe in eccleſiâ, quam in mundo habuit, manifeſtaſſe, et ut lucem veram ſuos illuminaſſe; etiamſi a maximâ mundi parte, et ab ipſis Judæis Carnalibus *agnitus non ſit:* explodens erroneam illorum hypotheſin qui Filium Dei ante ſuam ἐνανθρώπησιν ſe in mundo non manifeſtaſſe, neque illi cognitum fuiſſe, aſſerebant. Vitringa. Obſerv. Sacr. Vol. iii. p. 180.

[n] Sermons, p. 49.—52.

[o] Secundum autem nullam ſententiam hæreticorum, *Verbum Dei caro factum eſt.* Iren. L. iii. C. 11. p. 189. Conf. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. ſ. 4. p. 194.

deemed the thing to be incredible[a]. The Cerinthians admitted that a celeſtial Spirit deſcended occaſionally upon Jeſus; but they neither allowed that ſpirit to be perſonally united with Jeſus, nor to be properly divine, as St. John teaches: ſo that in two reſpects, thoſe words of the apoſtle confute their principles[b].

AND WE BEHELD HIS GLORY, THE GLORY AS OF THE ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER, &c. Words diametrically oppoſite to Cerinthus's hypotheſis[c], which made the Logos not the only begotten of the Father, but a remove farther off, viz. the Son of the only begotten, as before obſerved.

AND OF HIS FULNESS HAVE ALL WE RECEIVED, AND GRACE FOR GRACE. The expreſſion, of his fulneſs [ἐκ τῦ πληρώματος αὐτῦ] is very obſervable. The gnoſtics in general, and the Cerinthians in particular, were wont to talk much of the πλήρωμα, or fulneſs, by which they meant a fictitious plenitude of the Deity, in which the whole race of æons was ſuppoſed to ſubſiſt,

[a] Incredibile præſumpſerant Deum carnem. Tertul. contr. Marcion. L. iii. C. 8. p. 401. Conf. Juſt. Mart. Dial. p. 140, 204. Edit. Jebb.

[b] Dum dicit *Verbum caro factum, et habitavit inter nos*; ſignificat ipſum iſtum λόγον, qui *Filius Dei*, ſimulque *verus* ac *ſummus Deus* erat, quemque tam multis deſcripſerat verbis, *carnem factum*, hoc eſt, humanam naturam, non ad certum tempus, ſed perpetuo, indiſſolubili, et inſeparabili nexu adſumſiſſe. Budd. Eccl. Apoſt. p. 440.

[c] Indicat eundem iſtum λόγον, qui caro factus erat, etiam eſſe *unigenitum Patris:* adeoque diſcrimen illud quod Cerinthiani inter μονογενῆ ſive unigenitum et λόγον ſive Verbum, conſtituebant, explodit. Buddeus ibid. p. 440.

ſubſiſt, and into which ſpiritual men (ſuch as they eſteemed themſelves) ſhould hereafter be received. It was the doctrine of the Valentinians, (and probably of the elder Gnoſtics alſo) that they were themſelves of the ſpiritual ſeed, had conſtant grace, and could not fail of being admitted into the plenitude above[d]; while others were in their eſteem carnal, had grace but ſparingly, or occaſionally, and that not to bring them ſo high as the plenitude, but to an intermediate ſtation only. But St. John here aſſerts, that[e] all Chriſtians equally and indifferently, all believers at large, have received of the plenitude, or fulneſs of the divine Logos; and that not ſparingly, but in the largeſt meaſure, grace upon grace, accumulated grace[f]: or rather, grace following in conſtant ſucceſſion, grace for grace; that is, new ſuccours coming on as quick as the former ſhould wear off or ceaſe, or new ſupplies for the old ones paſt and gone[g], without failure, or intermiſſion. Our preſent rendering, grace for

[d] Iren. L. i. C. 6. p. 31.

[e] Docet denique ex hujus unigeniti et primogeniti Dei Filii πληρώματι (quâ notione gnoſtici uti conſueverunt) omnes accipere gratiam pro gratiâ, omnes omnis generis et ordinis in Chriſtum credentes, ejuſdem in hâc vitâ participes eſſe gratiæ, et ad ejuſdem gloriæ ſpem vocatos eſſe: neutiquam vero ita ſe rem habere ut gnoſtici jactitabant, ſolos ſuæ ſectæ homines, et ſuæ imbutos philoſophiæ myſteriis, ad ſummam illam felicitatem primi pleromatis divinitatis adſpirare poſſe, reliquorum credentium animabus inferioris et medii generis beatitudinis ſtatum deſtinatum eſſe. Vitringa. Obſ. Sacr. L. v. C. 13. p. 155, 156.

[f] See Bull. Harmon. Apoſtol. Diſſert. ii. C. 11. p. 481.

[g] Vid. Gataker. Adverſar. Sacr. C. 27.
Anonymi Fortuita Sacra, p. 80, 81, &c.
Suicer. Theſaur. in χάρις, p. 1497.

for grace, is literal, and juſt; provided only we underſtand it thus, that whenever one grace ceaſes or expires, another comes in its place, and is given us for the former, or in lieu of the former.

I have now run through the proeme of St. John's goſpel, endeavouring all the way to ſhew how aptly the expreſſions ſuit with the ſuppoſition which I here go upon, that it was penned with a particular view to the hereſies of Cerinthus and Ebion; to ſay nothing of Simon Magus, or the Gnoſtics of thoſe times: for though I have chiefly, or in a manner ſolely, made Cerinthus's hereſy the ſubject of this article, yet I would be underſtood to include any other heretics of the ſame time, or before him, ſo far as they fell in with the ſame common errors.

Let us now paſs on to St. John's firſt epiſtle, in order to conſider whether that likewiſe may not be naturally interpreted the ſame way; ſo that one and the ſame key may ſerve for both.

Irenæus ſeems to ſay, that St. John pointed his epiſtle[h] againſt the ſame. Tertullian alſo intimates, that St. John directed ſome parts of his epiſtle againſt the Ebionites[i]. And St. Jerome

[h] Igitur et omnes extra diſpoſitionem ſunt, qui, ſub obtentu agnitionis, alterum quidem Jeſum intelligunt, alterum autem Chriſtum, et alterum unigenitum, &c.—Quos Joannes in prædictâ epiſtolâ fugere eos præcepit, &c. ibid. p. 207.

[i] At in epiſtolâ eos maxime antichriſtos vocat, qui Chriſtum negarent in carne veniſſe, et qui non putarent Jeſum eſſe Filium Dei. Illud Marcion, hoc Hebion vindicavit. Tertull. Præſcrip. C. 33. p. 214.

Jerome inſinuates, that he pointed his cenſure both againſt Cerinthus and Ebion, marking them out as antichriſts, in his epiſtle[k]. If we come to examine the epiſtle itſelf, we ſhall eaſily perceive, that a great part of it was levelled, not ſo much againſt Jews or Pagans, as againſt falſe chriſtians, againſt the heretics of that time, Simonians perhaps, or Cerinthians, or Ebionites, or Nicolaitans, or all of them, according as his expreſſions here, or there, are particularly pointed. The two principal errors which he there cenſures, were, the denial of Chriſt's being come in the fleſh[l], and the diſowning that Jeſus was Chriſt[m]. The docetæ, (as they were afterwards called) the followers of Simon Magus, denied Chriſt's real humanity, making him a mere phantom, ſhadow, or apparition, a walking ghoſt, as I obſerved above[n]. And the Cerinthians making a diſtinction between Jeſus and Chriſt, did not allow that both were one perſon. Againſt thoſe chiefly St. John wrote his epiſtle. He ſpeaks of antichriſts newly riſen up[o]; which could not be intended of Jews or Pagans, who had oppoſed the goſpel all along: and he ſpeaks of men that had been of the church, but had apoſtatized from it; *they went out from us, but they were not of us*[p]. Let us now proceed to the explication

[k] See the whole paſſage cited above, p. 251.
[l] 1 John iv. 3. compare 2 John 7.
[m] 1 John ii. 22.
[n] See above, p. 12, 150.
[o] 1 John ii. 18, 22. iv. 3. 2 John 7.
[p] 1 John ii. 19.

explication of thoſe paſſages in St. John's epiſtle, which relate to our purpoſe.

The apoſtle obſerves, that THE WORD OF LIFE (or the Word in whom was life, John i. 4.) WAS FROM THE BEGINNING[q]; conformable to what he ſays in the entrance to his goſpel, and in oppoſition both to Cerinthus and Ebion, who made Jeſus a mere man, and who either denied any pre-exiſting ſubſtantial Logos, or, at moſt, ſuppoſed him to ſtand foremoſt in the rank of creatures. The apoſtle further ſtiles the ſame Logos ETERNAL LIFE[r], to intimate his eternal exiſtence, in oppoſition to the ſame heretics. He adds, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, parallel to what he ſays in his goſpel, *was with God*, and which has been explained above[s].

In the ſecond chapter of the ſame epiſtle, the apoſtle deſcribes the antichriſtian heretics of that time as DENYING THAT JESUS IS CHRIST; which amounted to the ſame with DENYING THE FATHER AND THE SON[t]; becauſe WHOSOEVER DENIETH THE SON, THE SAME HATH NOT THE FATHER[u]. Cerinthus denied that

[q] 1 John i. 1.

[r] 1 John i. 2. compare 1 John v. 20.

[s] See above, p. 254. Conf. Tertull. contr. Prax. C. xv. Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. C. 2. ſ. 5. p. 295.

[t] 1 John ii. 22.

[u] 1 John ii. 23. Apoſtoli verba—commune Cerinthi et Ebionis dogma manifeſtè perſtringunt, nam illi ambo Jeſum eſſe verum Dei Filium ante Mariam, adeoque ante res omnes creatas ex Deo Patre natum omnino negabant, ac proinde, apoſtolo judice, neque Deum Patrem reverà confeſſi ſunt: ſiquidem a revelato evangelio, nemo poteſt Deum Patrem rite colere aut credere, niſi qui Deum Filium ſimul amplectatur. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. ſ. 5. p. 296.

that Jeſus was Chriſt, dividing Chriſt from Jeſus, as before explained: and he of conſequence denied the Son, becauſe he allowed not that Jeſus was perſonally united with the Word, the eternal Son of God, nor that *that* Logos which he ſpeaks of was the *only begotten* of the Father, being Son only of the only begotten, according to his ſcheme: ſo that he totally diſowned the divine ſonſhip both of Jeſus and Chriſt, and by ſuch denial denied both the Father and Son[u].

The apoſtle then goes on to ſay, WHOSOEVER SHALL CONFESS THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD, GOD DWELLETH IN HIM, AND HE IN GOD[w]. Where again he manifeſtly ſtrikes at the Cerinthian and Ebionite principles, which allowed not Jeſus to be the Son of God, in any true and proper ſenſe, ſuch as St. John lays down in ſeveral places of his writings, but particularly in the entrance to his goſpel[x], as explained above. In

[u] Dum enim Cerinthiani negabant Jeſum eſſe Chriſtum, per veram ſcilicet perpetuamque unionem; Chriſtum inſuper Filium Dei verum et unigenitum inficiebantur; perinde hoc erat ac ſi et Patrem et Filium negaſſent, cum, ut recte Joannes dicit, *qui Filium negat, nec Patrem habeat.*—Eo ipſo enim dum negabant Jeſum eſſe Chriſtum, nec ipſum quoque Chriſtum pro Dei Filio agnoſcebant, non poterant non multo magis negare, Jeſum eſſe Filium Dei. Buddei Eccleſ Apoſtol. p. 445.

[w] 1 John iv. 15. compare iii. 23.

[x] Non eſt dubitandum quin apoſtolus his verbis confeſſionem exigat illius Filii Dei quem ipſe ex parte ſupra in hâc epiſtolâ prædicaverat, et plenius in evangelio ſuo declarat: nempe Filii Dei, qui ſit Dei Patris λόγος, qui *in principio* erat, et *apud Deum* erat, et *Deus ipſe erat*, per quem *omnia facta ſunt*, &c.—Hujuſmodi vero Dei Filium Jeſum noſtrum eſſe, non confeſſus eſt Cerinthus, neque poſt ipſum Ebion. Bull. Judic. C. 2. ſ. 9. p. 297.

In the chapter next following, the apoſtle repeats the ſame thing as before, or uſes words to the ſame effect: WHOSOVER BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, IS BORN OF GOD[a]. And ſoon after adds, WHO IS HE THAT OVERCOMETH THE WORLD, BUT HE THAT BELIEVETH THAT JESUS IS THE SON OF GOD[b]? Here lay the main ſtreſs, to believe that Jeſus, who was truly and really man, was as truly and really the eternal *Son of God*[c]. The apoſtle, in the next verſe, ſeems to point at the docetæ, as he had before done in the ſame epiſtle[d], being equally concerned to maintain, that Chriſt had real fleſh, as that he had real divinity; that ſo the faith of the goſpel might ſtand upon this firm foundation, that the eternal Son of God became Son of man for the ſalvation of mankind. Hereupon therefore the apoſtle, in defence of Chriſt's real humanity, ſays, THIS IS HE THAT CAME BY WATER AND BLOOD[e]. What he elſewhere expreſſes, by his *coming in the fleſh*[f], here he expreſſes more emphatically, by his *coming* in, or by, *water* and *blood*; alluding to what Chriſt ſhed at his paſſion, as a proof that he had then a real body, and was really man, not

[a] 1 John v. 1. [b] 1 John v. 5.

[c] Quia præ aliis maximè tunc creſceret Cerinthi hæreſis, ideo apoſtolus fidem illam quâ creditur *Jeſum* eſſe *Dei Filium*, paſſim in hâc epiſtolâ commendat, urget, inculcat. Bull. ibid. p. 297.

[d] 1 John iv. 2, 3. compare 2 John 7. and ſee Bull. Judic. p. 296 Buddei Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 550, &c.

[e] 1 John v. 6.

[f] 1 John i. 1, 2. iv. 2, 3. 2 John 7. compare 1 Tim. iii. 16. 1 Pet. iii. 18. iv. 1.

not a ſpectre, phantom, or apparition, as ſome heretics pretended. It is to be noted, that the ancient viſionaries, (who were the Simonians, Menandrians, Saturnilians, and Baſilidians) being aſhamed perhaps to confeſs Chriſt crucified[g], contrived any wild ſuppoſition imaginable to evade it. Baſilides pretended, that Chriſt himſelf did not ſuffer, but that Simon of Cyrene was crucified in his room[h]. The elder docetæ had not ſo happy a talent at inventing, but were content to ſay, that Chriſt had no real body, and ſuffered in appearance only, impoſing upon the eyes of the ſpectators. In oppoſition probably to that kind of men (of which there might be many in the apoſtolic age) the apoſtle here emphatically obſerves, that Chriſt came by *water* and *blood:* for his ſhedding both water and blood out of his ſide, at his paſſion, was a demonſtration, that there was a real body then hanging upon the croſs, not a phantom, or a ſpiritual ſubſtance. Which very argument is well urged by Irenæus[i], and Novatian

[g] Hence it is that Polycarp joins both together in the ſame reproof: πᾶς γὰρ, ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ Ιησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι, Ἀντίχριστός ἐστι· καὶ ὃς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ τὸ μαρτύριον τοῦ σταυροῦ, ἐκ τοῦ Διαβόλου ἐστί. Polycarp. Epiſt. C. 7. Conf. Epiphan. xxiv. 4. Philaſtr. C. 32.

[h] Irenæus, Lib. i. C. xxiv. alias xxii. p. 101.
Epiphan. xxiv. 3.
Philaſtr. C. xxxii. p. 68.
Auguſtin de Hæreſ. N. iv.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fab l. C. 4.

[i] Quomodo autem, cum caro non eſſet, ſed pareret (i. e. appareret) quaſi homo, crucifixus eſt, et a latere ejus puncto ſanguis exiit et aqua? Iren. Lib. iv. C. 33. (alias 57.) p. 271.

tian[k], in proof of the ſame thing, againſt the docetæ. As St. John is the only evangeliſt who has related that circumſtance of the paſſion[l], ſo it is obſervable, how particular a ſtreſs he lays upon it; immediately ſubjoining, in confirmation of it, AND HE THAT SAW IT (meaning himſelf perhaps, or elſe the ſoldier that pierced our Lord[m]) *bare record*, AND HIS RECORD IS TRUE, &c. And he confirms it farther from two prophecies out of the Old Teſtament. Wherefore it is the more probable that in his epiſtle before, he alluded to that circumſtance, and in proof of Chriſt's humanity. But St. John ſtrengthens the argument further, by ſuperadding the conſideration of the teſtimony of the ſpirit. AND THERE IS THE SPIRIT ALSO BEARING WITNESS, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS TRUTH [n]*itſelf*, is eſſential truth. The Spirit reſiding in the church, and working in believers by ſupernatural graces, bears teſtimony to the doctrine taught by the apoſtles, and believed by the church; particularly to the doctrine here ſpoken of, viz. that Chriſt the *Son of God*, became *Son of man* for the ſalvation of mankind.

The apoſtle, having ſaid that the *Spirit is truth*, or eſſential truth, (which was giving him

[k] Sanguis idcirco de manibus ac pedibus, atque ipſo latere demanavit, ut noſtri conſors corporis probaretur, dum occaſûs noſtri legibus moritur. Novat. C. x. p. 31. Edit. Welchm.

[l] John xix. 34.

[m] See Dodwell, diſſert. in Iren. 1. p 39.

[n] 1 John v. 6.

him a title, common to God the Father, and to Chriſt) in order to obviate any miſapprehenſion, or offence, accounts for what he had ſaid, and reconciles it, by declaring preſently, that the Father, and the Word, and the Spirit, are all One, are equally truth itſelf: FOR THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR RECORD IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT; AND THESE THREE ARE ONE[o]. Therefore it was as right to ſay, that the Spirit is truth, as it might be to ſay it either of Father or Son, ſince they are all one. That point being cleared, the apoſtle then returns[p] to ſpeak of the Spirit, the water, and the blood, as teſtifying the ſame thing to mankind, which is teſtified above to the angels in heaven. And the Spirit is now particularly mentioned as bearing witneſs in earth (rather than the Father or the Son) becauſe, ſince the time of Chriſt's aſcenſion, the church has been under the ſpecial œconomy of the Holy Spirit, who was to *guide* the apoſtles, and the churches after them, *into all truth*[q].

I know it has been objected, that this way of reckoning the Spirit twice, is reducing the ſix witneſſes to five. Now, indeed, if the text had called them ſix witneſſes, there would have been ſome force in the objection: but as it is mere fancy and preſumption, to make them ſix, we may take the liberty to think, that the fifth twice told will fully anſwer all that the text mentions.

The

[o] 1 John v. 7. [p] 1 John v. 8. [q] John xvi. 13.

The apoſtle having ſaid thus much of the teſtimony of the Spirit, who is one with the Father, comes next to make the proper application of it, inforcing it ſtill farther, by directly calling it the teſtimony of God: IF WE RECEIVE THE WITNESS OF MEN, THE WITNESS OF GOD IS GREATER; FOR THIS IS THE WITNESS OF GOD, WHICH HE HATH TESTIFIED OF HIS SON[r].—THAT GOD HATH GIVEN TO US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON[s]. This is the burden of the whole epiſtle, the ſum and ſubſtance of what the apoſtle aims at quite through[t], that God had been pleaſed to reconcile the world unto himſelf by the mediation of his own divine Son made man. This was what the water and the blood teſtified in part, and what the Spirit of God, one with God, more abundantly teſtifies in the whole[u].

I was willing thus occaſionally to explain that celebrated paſſage, concerning the three witneſſes, which has been the ſubject of long and warm debates, both as to the genuineneſs of

[r] 1 John v. 9. [s] 1 John v. 11.

[t] Hæc eſt ſumma: omnem doctorem, qui confeſſus fuerit unum Jeſum Chriſtum, verum Dei Filium, propter hominum ſalutem verè hominem factum, ex Deo eſſe; (nimirum eâ parte, quâ id confitetur et docet, ut recte Eſtius) contra pro pſeudo prophetâ atque antichriſto habendum eſſe, quiſquis hoc confeſſus non fuerit. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. 2. ſ. 9. p. 297.

[u] Immo quæ deinceps, ver. 6, 7, 8. de tribus teſtibus, in cœlo pariter ac in terrâ, docet, huc præcipue comparata eſſe videntur, ut oſtendat Jeſum eſſe Filium Dei, quod Cerinthiani, ut diximus negabant. Hinc concludit: *ſi hominum teſtimonium admittimus, Dei teſtimonium majus eſt.* Quodnam eſt hoc Dei teſtimonium? reſpondet: *atque hoc eſt, quod Deus de Filio ſuo teſtimonium dixit.* Buddeus. Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 446.

of the text, and the connexion of it with the reſt, upon which hangs the true interpretation. The expoſition which I have given, appears to me juſt and natural, ſuppoſing the text to be genuine: and I conceive, that the genuineneſs thereof has been ſufficiently maintained by a great many able hands[w]; and particularly by a late learned accurate writer[x], to whoſe uſeful labours I refer the reader for ſatisfaction, and now I return.

The apoſtle, in the cloſe, remarkably ſums up all, in theſe ſtrong and choſen words: WE KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD IS COME, AND HATH GIVEN US AN UNDERSTANDING, THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM THAT IS TRUE: AND WE ARE IN HIM THAT IS TRUE, EVEN IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. THIS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE[y]. I need not here ſtand to prove, that the title of *true God*, in this text, is to be underſtood of Chriſt, becauſe I have done it elſewhere[z]: but I would obſerve farther, how aptly every word is choſen to obviate the erroneous tenets of Cerinthus, and of other the like falſe teachers of thoſe times. *The Son of God:* not the ſon of Joſeph and Mary, nor the ſon of the only begotten, but the

[w] See moſt of them numbered up in Taylor's true ſcripture doctrine of the Trinity, p. 32.

[x] Mr. Twell's critical examination of the new Text and Verſion of the New Teſtament, part ii. p. 123.—154.

[y] 1 John v. 20. [z] Sermons, p. 206—214. Compare Taylor's true Scripture Doctrine, p. 282, &c. Dr. Biſhop's eight Sermons, p. 56, &c.

the immediate Son of God; related to God as a ſon to a father, not as a creature to his Lord and Maker. He *is come*, come in the fleſh, and not merely to reſide for a time, or occaſionally, and to fly off again but to abide and dwell with man, cloathed with humanity. We are *in him that is true*, in the true Father, by *his Son Jeſus Chriſt:* who is the *true God*; not an inferior power or angel, (ſuch as Cerinthus ſuppoſed the demiurgus to be) not a created æon, the offspring of the monogenes, or of ſilence, as Cerinthus fondly imagined the Logos to be; but *true God*, one with the Father: *and eternal life*, the ſame that had been with the Father from the beginning, before any thing was created, conſequently from all eternity.

I have now gone through both the epiſtle and goſpel of St. John, pointing out the moſt obſervable paſſages in both, which concerned the preſent queſtion. The ſum of what I have advanced under this article, is, that St. John moſt apparently levelled a great part of his firſt epiſtle againſt the Cerinthian doctrines; and that it may be ſtrongly argued, from evidences external and internal, that he wrote the proeme to his goſpel with the ſame, or the like views. It appears further, that in his epiſtle particularly, he has aſſerted the neceſſity of believing our Lord's divine ſonſhip, his proper divinity, under pain of being excluded heaven and happineſs: *Whoſoever denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father.* Whoſoever denies Chriſt to be Son of God (in St. John's

John's ſenſe of Son, a ſon that was always with God, and is God) is a *liar* and *antichriſt*, denying both *the Father and the Son*[a]. The concluſion therefore from all is, that the denying our bleſſed Lord's real divinity, is hereſy and antichriſtianiſm, much to be abhorred by every diſciple of Chriſt, according to the infallible deciſion of an inſpired apoſtle[b]. Many were the evaſions and ſubterfuges of ſelf opinionated men, who thought it a thing incredible that the divine word ſhould put on fleſh, or God become man, and who choſe rather to paſs cenſure upon the wiſdom of heaven, than ſuſpect their own: but ſober and modeſt men reſigned up their faith to divine revelation, as was their bounden duty to do; and among the foremoſt of thoſe was our bleſſed apoſtle. So now, beſides the reaſon of things, taking in what the ſcriptures have declared of the truth of our doctrine, and beſides the true and natural import of the form of baptiſm (urged above) we have moreover the determination of St. John himſelf, for the importance

[a] 1 John ii. 22, 23. Conf. John iii. 16, 17, 18.

[b] Hæc autem ideò fuſiùs proſecutus ſum, quod hinc non modo ex antiquiſſimorum Patrum monumentis, ſed etiam ex ſcriptis apoſtolicis, omnibus liqueat, fuiſſe in ipſo apoſtolorum ævo, qui Chriſti Domini noſtri divinitatem negarunt, quique eo nomine pro hæreticis, adeoque pro antichriſtis (tantum aberat ut fratres et vera eccleſiæ membra cenſerentur) ab apoſtolis habiti fuerint. Præterea, hinc quoque clarè elucet, doctrinam de Filii Dei ὑπαρχώσει, ſive de Chriſto θεανθρώπῳ, vero Deo et vero homine, ut a naſcente evangelio variè a variis hæreticis impugnata fuit, ita ab eccleſiæ veris paſtoribus, modis omnibus omnique ſtudio, tanquam Fidei Chriſtianæ caput et fundamentum ipſum, religioſiſſime ſemper conſervatam et cuſtoditam fuiſſe. Bull. Judic. Eccl. p. 298.

ance of the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, and of conſequence, for the doctrine of a coequal and coeternal Trinity.

But ſuppoſing it might be reaſonably doubted (though I ſee not how it can) whether we have rightly interpreted St. John as to the main thing, or whether Cerinthus and others of like principles, were directly ſtruck at by him; yet ſtill we may be able to maintain our point another way, by ſhowing at leaſt that the ancient churches, next ſucceeding the apoſtles, and the churches after, did condemn Cerinthus and Ebion, and all others who denied our Lord's real and proper divinity. And I may here obſerve, before I go farther, that if what I have offered about St. John's condemning the doctrine of Cerinthus, be juſt, it may be conſidered as looking forwards, and condemning the principles of the Ebionites alſo, whom I am next to mention: and ſo on the other hand, what I ſhall have to ſay of the Ebionites, and their being condemned by the church, may be underſtood to look backwards, equally affecting the Cerinthians ſo far as they agreed in the ſame common ſentiments. Indeed, Biſhop Bull had conſidered both together, and in a ſcriptural view, as I have hitherto conſidered Cerinthus ſingly. But I apprehend that if one were taken in a ſcriptural, and the other in an eccleſiaſtical view, the two parts would reflect light and ſtrength one upon another, and the whole would be both more diſtinct, and more compleat.

pleat. I proceed then to conſider the Ebionites, as cenſured by the church, in the ſecond and third centuries, for denying our Lord's divinity, though, if what I have advanced be true, they were fully condemned before for the ſame, even within the apoſtolic age, as well as the Cerinthians.

A. D. 72. *Ebion.*

From Cerinthus the maſter, I paſs on to Ebion, his diſciple and ſucceſſor[a]; ſo called, I ſuppoſe, becauſe of his being Cerinthus's admirer and follower, in ſome things. They ſeem to have been contemporaries, both of the apoſtolic age, though Ebion, perhaps, the younger or later of the two. I follow Epiphanius chiefly, in placing Ebion as I do[b], a little after the time of the deſtruction of Jeruſalem. But if he flouriſhed ten, or twenty years later, or began to ſpread his hereſy but a little before St. John wrote his goſpel, (that is, before A. D. 97.) as Jerome ſeems to have thought, that will make no difference with reſpect to the main thing which I am upon.

Neither is it very material, whether there ever was ſuch a perſon as Ebion, founder of the ſect, or

[a] Hujus ſucceſſor Hebion fuit, Cerintho non in omni parte conſentiens. Pſeudo Tertullian Præſcript. C. 48. p. 221.

Hebion diſcipulus Cerinthi, in multis ei ſimiliter errans, &c. Philaſtr. Hæreſ. xxxvii. p. 81.

Cerinthum, et hujus ſucceſſorem Ebionem. Hieronym. Dial. contr. Lucifer. p. 304.

[b] Epiphan. Hær. xxx. 2.

or whether the Ebionites took their name from their mean condition, or from their poor and abject notions, rather than from any leader called Ebion. But as the ancients in general do aſſert there was ſuch a man[c], though ſome few of them may ſeem to contradict it, I cannot but eſteem their teſtimonies as much more weighty than the conjectures of ſome learned moderns[d], though ſpecious, to the contrary. Beſides that other as learned and judicious moderns[e] have well defended the ancient perſuaſion, and have ſufficiently replied to the common exceptions made to it. Wherefore, there remains very little room for doubt or ſcruple, as to the truth of the fact, that there was formerly ſuch a perſon as Ebion, founder of the ſect of the Ebionites.

The

[c] Tertullian Præſcript. C. x, xxxiii. de carn. Chriſti, C. xiv, xviii. Virg. Veland. C. vi.
Victorinus Petavion. in Apocalypſ.
Alexand. Alexandr. Epiſt. Synod. apud Theodorit. E. H. L. 1. C. iv. p. 15.
Hilarius, p. 779, 789, 799, 916, 919. Edit. Bened.
Ruffin. in Symbol. p. 27.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fabul. p. 188, 218.
Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxx. 2. et paſſim.
Philaſtr. Hær. xxxvii. p. 81.
Hieron. contr. Lucifer. p. 304, et in Iſai. i. 3. p. 10. adv. Helvid. p. 141. et alibi.
Auguſtin. Epiſt. ad Hieronym. lxxii. p. 195. Ed. Bened.

[d] See the moſt of them numbered up in Ittigius de Hæreſ. primi ſecul. p. 303. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 492.

[e] Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. C. ii. ſ. 17. p. 303.
Fabricius in not. ad Philaſtr. p. 81, &c.
Moſheim. Obſerv. Sacr. L. i. C. 5. Et in Vindic. cont. Toland. C. vii.
Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 491, &c.
Berriman, Serm. p. 48.

The Ebionites, as all allow, denied any proper divinity of Chriſt. Some of them indeed admitted that he was born of a virgin[f]; but moſt of them, the elder Ebionites eſpecially, denied even that[g], and none of them confeſſed his true godhead. I ſhall not here ſtand to enumerate or clear their ſentiments, becauſe they are well known; beſides that they will appear diſtinctly in the ſequel, as I run through the antenicene writers in order, who have condemned the Ebionites by name, or at the leaſt have condemned their principles, as amounting to hereſy.

A. D. 107. I ſhall begin with Ignatius, an eminent perſonage, a diſciple of St. John, and by him ordained biſhop of Antioch, and who afterwards died a martyr, either in 116, or 107. Accounts differ as to the time: I chuſe, with the learned Moſheim[h], to take the earlier date, according to the acts of his martyrdom, being as probable as the other. Ignatius does not mention the Ebionites by name; but he plainly enough condemns their principles, in more places than one.

In his epiſtle to the Epheſians, he commends their unity of faith and doctrine, inaſmuch

[f] Vid. Origen. contr. Celſ. L. v. p. 272.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1. p. 219.

[g] Vid. Irenæus, L. iii. C. 21. p. 215. L. v. C. 1. p. 292.
Tertullian de carn. Chriſti, C. xiv. p. 319.
Euſebius Eccl. H. L. iii. C. 27.
Epiphan. Hær. xxx. p. 125.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1. p. 218.
Philaſtr. Hæreſ. xxxvii. p. 82.

[h] Moſheim, Vindiciæ antiquæ contr. Toland. C. viii. p. 230.

aſmuch as they walked according to truth, and no hereſy dwelt with them[i]. Then he proceeds to ſpeak of heretics, as follows: "Some are "wont to bear about them the name [of Chriſt] "in wicked craftineſs, while they commit things "unworthy of God; whom it behoves you to "avoid as you would wild beaſts. For they "are a kind of fell dogs that will bite you "unawares: you ſhould be upon your guard "againſt them, as they are next to incurable. "There is one phyſician fleſhly and ſpiritual, "made and not made, God incarnate, in mor-"tality true life, both of Mary and of God, "firſt paſſible and then impaſſible, [Jeſus Chriſt "our Lord] let no one therefore deceive you; "as hitherto you are not deceived, but are wholly "of God[k]."

Theſe words of Ignatius, in their general view, ſtrike at all the hereſies of that time, which any way tended to undermine the doctrine of God incarnate, whether by impugning Chriſt's humanity, or divinity: and as the Ebionites and Cerinthians were among thoſe that impugned our Lord's divinity, the cenſure here given, muſt of

[i] Ignat. Epiſt ad Epheſ. C. vi.

[k] Ἐιώθασι γάρ τινες δόλῳ ποιηρῷ τὸ ὄνομα περιφέρειν, ἀλλά τινα πράσσοντες ἀνάξια θεοῦ ὅς δεῖ ὑμᾶς ὡς θηρία ἐκκλίνειν· εἰσὶν γὰρ κύνες λυσσῶντες, λαθροδήκται· ὃς δεῖ ὑμᾶς φυλάσσεσθαι ὄντας δυσθεραπεύτους· εἷς ἰατρός ἐστιν, σαρκικός τε καὶ πνευματικός, γενητὸς καὶ ἀγενητὸς, ἐν σαρκὶ γενόμενος θεὸς, ἐν θανάτῳ ζωὴ ἀληθινὴ, καὶ ἐκ Μαρίας καὶ ἐκ θεοῦ, πρῶτον παθητὸς καὶ τοτε ἀπαθὴς· μὴ ὄν τις ὑμᾶς ἐξαπατάτω, ὥσπερ καὶ ἐξαπατᾶσθε, ὅλοι ὄντες θεοῦ. Ignat. ad Epheſ. vii, viii.

of courſe affect them. Some of the expreſſions ſeem to be particularly pointed at them. *Made and not made:* the words *not made*, directly confront both thoſe hereſies[l]. So alſo, the words God incarnate, God coming in the fleſh. Then again, *of Mary and of God:* thoſe heretics would have ſaid, of Mary and of Joſeph; none of them would then have ſaid, *of God.* Let the reader obſerve, that Ignatius here plainly excludes all ſuch heretics from ſalvation, ſince they had rejected the only phyſician that could heal them, Chriſt *godman*, by denying the union of God and man in him[m]. The principles which this truly primitive apoſtolical writer goes upon, are, 1. That the ſalutary doctrine of redemption is, that the reconciliation of God and man is wrought by a mediator who is both God and man. 2. That denying and oppoſing that doctrine, is in effect, renouncing all claim to the benefit of it, ſince it is reaſonable to think, that when God reveals his good and gracious deſigns towards mankind, they who will not give credit to them, ſhall have no

[l] See my ſecond Defence, 254, alias 259. Bull, Def. F. N. ſect. iii. C. 2. p. 39. Judic. Eccl. C. i. N. 1. p. 286.

[m] Nulla eſt hominibus ſalus, niſi per unicum animarum medicum, Chriſtum Deum et hominem, Deum inter homineſque mediatorem. At iſti hujuſmodi medicum et mediatorem nullum agnoſcunt, nullum volunt. Itaque plane deplorata eſt ipſorum ſalus, niſi ſcilicet ab hæreſi ſuâ tandem ſerio reſipiſcant, ac Deum Filium pro ſuâ ſalute incarnatum atque hominem factum amplectantur, atque omni obſequio venerentur. Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. p. 286.

no part in them. St. John himſelf ſeems to go upon the ſame general principle, where he ſays, *Whoſoever denieth the Son, the ſame hath not the Father*[a]. He that throws up the belief of the privileges granted, does interpretatively throw up the privileges themſelves. This is a maxim which appears to run through the writings of all the fathers, where they are treating of hereſies; and we ſhall find more of it as we paſs along.

In the ſame epiſtle, the ſame heavenly man, after expreſſing his deteſtation of hereſies in very ſtrong words, which I have quoted above[b], proceeds to ſet down the faith of the church, with reſpect to the incarnation of the Son of God, in theſe remarkable lines: "For, Jeſus Chriſt, "*our God*, was conceived of Mary, according to "the divine diſpenſation, being of the ſeed of "David, and of the Holy Spirit[c]." Againſt the impugners of this doctrine, the good man, in the ſame place, threatens hell and damnation[d]: ſo little was he acquainted with that neutrality and indifference which has ſince too much prevailed. Yet he was a perſon of admirable lenity in his temper, and of a moſt exalted charity; which he proved by that very inſtance, ſince nothing could have extorted thoſe expreſſions

[a] 1 John ii. 23.

[b] See above, p. 278.

[c] Ὁ γὰρ θεὸς ἡμῶν, Ιησοῦς ὁ Χριστὸς, ἐκυοφορήθη ὑπὸ Μαρίας, κατ' οἰκονομίαν θεοῦ, ἐκ σπέρματος μὲν Δαβὶδ, πνεύματος δὲ ἁγίου. Ignat. ad Epheſ. C, xviii.

[d] Ὁ τοιοῦτος ξυπαρὸς γενόμενος, εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ ἄσβεστον χωρήσει, ὁ μοίως καὶ ἀκούων αὐτοῦ. C. xvi.

expreſſions from him, but a moſt ardent zeal for the ſalvation of ſouls[e].

A. D. 155. Juſtin the philoſopher, afterwards martyr, is our next conſiderable writer. His real and great concern for the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, appears all the way through his famous dialogue with Trypho the Jew; being the relation of a conference he had held at Epheſus with that moſt celebrated rabbi[f]. He makes no expreſs mention of the Ebionites, and ſo does not condemn them by name; but he does it more than once, by neceſſary inference and implication. I forbear to cite places, chuſing rather, for brevity ſake, to refer the reader to Biſhop Bull, who has produced them at length, and deſcanted properly upon them[g].

But there is one paſſage in Juſtin, which requires a more particular conſideration, becauſe the ſocinians and remonſtrants have frequently

[e] In ſeductores, et ſeductos iſtos intonat, et ignem ipſis inextinguibilem minatur vir alioqui mitiſſimus, quod primam religionis Chriſtianæ veritatem, cujus præcipue στύλος καὶ ἑδραίωμα eſſe debet, monente apoſtolo, omnis vera Chriſti Eccleſia—— nempe *magnum illud pietatis myſterium, Deum in carne manifeſtatum* fuiſſe convellere niterentur. Qui iſtam impietatem moliti ſunt, duo fuere, Ignatii ætate, hæreticorum genera, ſibi invicem non minus quam veritati repugnantium. Alii divinam quandam ſervatori noſtro naturam attribuentes, humanam prorſus ipſi detraxerunt—quâ in hæreſi fuere Simoniani, Menandriani, Saturniniani, aliique, quos propterea omnes δοκητὰς et φαντασιαστὰς poſterior ætas appellavit. Alii contra, humanam tantum in Domino Jeſu naturam agnoſcebant, ut Cerinthiani, et Ebionæi. Utra hæreſis perniciоſior fuerit, haud facile dictu. Bull. Judic. C. 1. p 287.

[f] Euſeb. E. H. L. iv. C. 18.

[g] Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. C. vii. ſ. xi, xii. p. 349, &c.

quently boaſted of it, and do ſo to this day, as proving, in their opinion, that thoſe who diſowned Chriſt's proper divinity, or even preexiſtence, were tolerated in the primitive church, were received as brethren and fellow chriſtians. This pretence has been largely and ſolidly confuted by Biſhop Bull; and as there is ſcarce room for adding any thing (the queſtion being in a manner exhauſted) ſo neither is there much need of any reinforcement. But it may be of ſome uſe to recapitulate what that learned prelate has ſaid, as alſo to take ſome brief notice of what the adverſaries have ſince attempted, in order to depreciate and diſparage it, inſtead of making any juſt reply to it. I ſhall firſt cite the whole paſſage of Juſtin, and then give a ſummary account of Biſhop Bull's reaſonings upon it, that ſo the reader may judge for himſelf, as to the force of them. Trypho, the Jew, in the dialogue, having a little before told Juſtin, that his doctrine concerning Chriſt (that he was God before the world, and afterwards became man, and of a virgin) appeared to him a very great paradox, and contrary to common ſenſe, Juſtin replies as follows[h]: "I am

[h] Οἶδ' ὅτι παράδοξος ὁ λόγος δοκεῖ εἶναι καὶ μάλιστα τοῖς ἀπὸ τῆς γένους ὑμῶν, οἵτινες τὰ τῆ θεῷ ὅτε νοῆσαι ὅτε ποιῆσαι ποτε βεβούλησθε, ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν διδασκάλων ὑμῶν, ὡς αὐτὸς ὁ θεὸς βοᾷ· ἤδη μέντοι, ὦ Τρίφων, εἶπον, ἐκ ἀπόλλυται τὸ τοιοῦτον [τοῦτον] εἶναι Χριστὸν τῷ θεῷ, ἐὰν ἀποδεῖξαι μὴ δύναμαι ὅτι καὶ προϋπῆρχεν υἱὸς τῷ ποιητῇ τῶν ὅλων, θεὸς ὢν, καὶ γεγέννηται ἄνθρωπος διὰ τῆς παρθένου, ἀλλὰ ἐκ παντὸς ἀποδεικνυμένου ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ τῷ θεῷ, ὅστις ὅτος ἐστι, ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἀποδείκνυω ὅτι προϋπῆρχε, καὶ γεννηθῆναι ἄνθρωπος

" am very ſenſible that this account will look
" like a paradox, and more eſpecially to thoſe
" of your nation, who are in no diſpoſition
" either to apprehend or follow the things of
" God, but the dictates only of your own rab-
" bins, as God himſelf proclaims[i]. Neverthe-
" leſs (ſaid I to Trypho) my argument does not
" fall, as to his being the Meſſiah of God,
" though I ſhould not be able to prove that the
" Son of the Maker of the univerſe preexiſted,
" being God, and was born a man of the
" virgin: but after it has been once fully proved
" that he is the Meſſiah of God (whatever elſe
" he be) though I ſhould not farther demon-
" ſtrate his preexiſtence, and his condeſcending
" to become man of like paſſions with us, taking
" fleſh upon him according to the Father's
" good pleaſure, all that you can juſtly ſay
" is, that I am ſo far in an error, but you
" ſhould not hereupon deny that he is the
" Chriſt, appearing as a man born of human
" parents, and approving himſelf as the choſen
" Meſſiah.

ἄνθρωπος ὁμοιοπαθὴς ἡμῖν, σάρκα ἔχων, κατὰ τὴν τοῦ πατρὸς βουλὴν ὑπέμεινεν, ἐν τούτῳ πεπλανῆσθαι με μόνον λέγειν δίκαιον, ἀλλὰ μὴ ἀρνεῖσθαι ὅτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός, ἐὰν φαίνηται ὡς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γεννηθεὶς, καὶ ἐκλογῇ γενόμενος εἰς τὸν χριστὸν εἶναι ἀποδεικνύηται· καὶ γὰρ εἰσί τινες, ὦ φίλοι, ἔλεγον ἀπὸ τοῦ ἡμετέρου [ὑμετέρου] γένους ὁμολογοῦντες αὐτὸν χριστὸν εἶναι, ἄνθρωπον δὲ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων γινόμενον ἀποφαινόμενοι· οἷς οὐ συντίθεμαι οὐδ' ἂν πλείονες ταῦτα μοι δοξάσαντες εἴποιεν, ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἀνθρωπείοις διδάγμασι κεκελεύσμεθα ὑπ' αὐτοῦ τοῦ χριστοῦ πείθεσθαι, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῶν μακαρίων προφητῶν κηρυχθεῖσι καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ διδαχθεῖσι. Juſt. Dial. p. 140. Jebb. 235. Thirlby.

[i] Iſaiah xxix. 13.

" Meſſiah. For, ſaid I, my good friends, ſome " there are of our profeſſion (of your nation[k]) " who acknowledging him to be the Meſſiah, yet " conceive of him as of a man born of human " parents: whom however I aſſent not to, no " not though there were ever ſo many concur- " ring to tell me ſo[l]; ſince we are commanded by " Chriſt himſelf, not to ſubmit to the doctrines " of men, but to what the holy prophets have " delivered, and himſelf hath taught us."

This is the famous paſſage, from whence (as I have ſaid) the ſocinians and remonſtrants have endeavoured to draw an argument for neutrality or indifference concerning the article of Chriſt's divinity; imagining that the impugners of that doctrine were received by Juſtin and the church in his time, as brethren and fellow chriſtians. But there is nothing in this

[k] Ἀπὸ τῦ ὑμετέρυ γένυς, is undoubtedly the true reading; warranted by the propriety of the expreſſion, and Juſtin's uſual phraſeology, and the whole turn and texture of the ſentence. See Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. vii. ſ. 6. p. 346. Thirlby, in locum.

Nevertheleſs, one might perhaps, in prudence, wave this juſt criticiſm, ſince nothing depends upon it, as to the main cauſe (except it be, to make Juſtin write ſenſe ſo far) but the inſiſting upon it, gives the adverſaries a handle for dropping the material things, and making ſome ſhew of an oppoſition upon this bypoint, as if all depended upon it.

[l] I preſer the rendering here given before the common one, taking the hint from the ingenious Mr. Thirlby in his notes upon the paſſage. The common rendering is; "neither would it be admitted by the generality [of Chriſtians] who are in my ſentiments." The ſenſe is flat.

this paragraph of Juſtin to ſupport ſuch fancies. Let it be obſerved in the firſt place, that the perſons whom Juſtin here ſpeaks of, as believing in Jeſus as the Meſſiah, but denying his birth of a virgin, and his preexiſtence, were moſt certainly the Ebionites of his time. Their hypotheſis, and theirs only, exactly anſwers the deſcription here given; as Biſhop Bull has demonſtrated at large[m]. This premiſed, we may now proceed to lay down the arguments urged by Biſhop Bull, againſt the conſtruction offered by the remonſtrants, and next ſubjoin a ſummary of the ſolutions he has given in anſwer to their objections.

1. As the paſſage itſelf in Juſtin, is very far from declaring in expreſs terms, or by any certain conſequence, what ſome collect from it, ſo it is very unlikely, that Juſtin ſhould be ſingular in his ſentiments on that head, directly thwarting the ſentiments of Ignatius before him, of Irenæus and Tertullian of the ſame century with him, and, in ſhort, of all the ancients beſides him, who have conſtantly condemned thoſe Ebionite principles, as pernicious and heretical[n].

2. The argument drawn from this paſſage, by our adverſaries, if it proves any thing at all, proves too much; which is a certain ſign that it is faulty. For it proves that even thoſe who denied our Lord's birth of a virgin (a truth atteſted to by the prophets and evangeliſts,

[m] Bull. Judic. Eccleſ. C. vii. ſ. 8. p. 347.
[n] See Bull. Judic. C. vii. ſ. 5. p. 345.

geliſts, and moſt religiouſly held by the ancient church) were received as fellow chriſtians; which is highly abſurd [n].

3. It is very obſervable, that the Ebionites rejected three of the goſpels, receiving only St. Matthew's (or what they called ſo) and that curtailed. They rejected likewiſe all St. Paul's writings, reproaching him as an apoſtate [o]. How unlikely is it, that Juſtin ſhould own ſuch reprobates as thoſe were, for fellow chriſtians! Epiſcopius was himſelf ſenſible of this difficulty, and could not but acknowledge it plainly abſurd, that Juſtin, and the church of his time, ſhould hold any communion with ſuch an ungodly race of men as the Ebionites were [p]. What ſalvo therefore had he for it? None but the denying that Juſtin was there ſpeaking of the Ebionites; though it is a plain caſe, that he was. Therefore Epiſcopius was here caught in his own

[n] Qui enim hic a Juſtino notantur dogmatiſtæ, ſervatorem noſtrum, non modo hominem tantum, ſed hominem ex hominibus genitum, hoc eſt, ex viri et fœminæ concubitu, communi hominum more, natum eſſe affirmarunt. Hinc igitur, ſi recte ex hoc loco remonſtrantes argumentantur, ſequetur, Juſtinum eccleſiamque Juſtini tempore, cum iis qui ſuſque deque habitâ ſacrorum evangeliſtarum authoritate, ſpretâque apoſtolicæ et catholicæ eccleſiæ conſtanti concordique traditione Chriſtum hominem ex Mariâ Virgine natum eſſe negare auſi ſunt, communionem coluiſſe: quod quiſquis ſerio ſibi perſuaſerit, ad anticyras plane relegandus eſt. Bull. ibid. ſ. 3. p. 343.

[o] Ebionæi—ſolo eo quod eſt ſecundum Mattheum evangelio utuntur, et apoſtolum Paulum recuſant, apoſtatam eum legis dicentes. Iren. L. i. C. 26. Conf. Epiphah. Hær. xxx. 13. Euſeb. E. H. L. iii. C. 27. Origen. contra Celſ. L. v. p. 274. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 1.

[p] Vid. Reſponſ. ad ſpecim. Calumn. p. 296.

own ſnare, as Biſhop Bull juſtly obſerves, retorting his own conceſſions upon him, with irreſiſtible force[q].

4. Add to this, that the liturgies then uſed in the church, were ſo full and expreſs for the divinity of Chriſt, that there is no likelihood that the Ebionites ſhould join in them; neither could they do it without ſolemn mockery. See this argument drawn out at large, in Biſhop Bull[r].

5. If the church would have communicated with the Ebionites, the Ebionites would not with them: and therefore Juſtin could never have intended to call them brethren. See this alſo explained at large in Biſhop Bull[s]. Theſe are the reaſons which that incomparable prelate has urged againſt the ſocinian, or epiſcopian conſtruction of the paſſage in Juſtin. But as it is not always ſufficient to demonſtrate a truth, and leave it to ſhift for itſelf, without reconciling it, and clearing it from objections; we may next go on to ſpecify the ſolutions given to the difficulties pleaded on the other ſide.

1. It is pleaded, that according to Juſtin, a perſon might reaſonably be ſuppoſed the Meſſiah, though no more than a man. But to this it is anſwered, that Juſtin no where aſſerts that ſuch a thing could be ſuppoſed conſiſtently with ſcripture, or good ſenſe. No; his

[q] Vid. Bull. Append. ad C. vii. ſect. 9. 357.
[r] Bull. ibid. p. 353.
[s] Bull. ibid. p. 349. Conf. p. 346.

his conſtant doctrine is, and which he every where labours and contends for, that the Meſſiah is, and muſt be God[t]. But ſince the Jews, with whom he was diſputing, had taken up low notions of their expected Meſſiah, Juſtin urged it againſt Trypho, as an argument to him, and ſuch as upon his principles he could not gainſay, that he might receive Jeſus (as his Ebionite countrymen had done) for the Meſſiah, though he diſowned his godhead. So there was no neceſſity for his continuing in Judaiſm, though he would not admit the divinity of Jeſus.

2. It is pleaded, that thoſe impugners of Chriſt's divinity, are ſtyled men of our profeſſion, that is, chriſtians; and therefore he admitted them as fellow chriſtians. To ſay nothing here of the truer reading (*men of your nation*) there is no conſequence in the argument. The Ebionites were chriſtians in a large ſenſe, men of chriſtian profeſſion, nominal chriſtians; as Juſtin allowed the worſt of heretics to be[u]: and this is all he could mean by allowing the Ebionites to be chriſtians[w].

3. It is pleaded, that Juſtin ſignified his diſſent from them very faintly, and coldly (*whom I aſſent not to*) expreſſing no deteſtation or abhorrence of the men, or of their prin-

[t] See this explained at large in Bull. C. vii. p. 344, 345.

[u] Vid. Dialog. p. 100, 244, 245. Jebb. alias, 208, 311, 312. Apolog. i. p. 43. Edit. Thirlby.

[w] Vid. Bull. Judic. C. vii. ſ. 6. p. 346. Zornii Opuſc. Sacr. Vol. 1. p. 77.

principles. To which it may be anſwered, 1. That he expreſſes himſelf as ſtrongly here, as he does in another cauſe of great moment, againſt thoſe who denied that the world was created[w]. 2. As Juſtin here expreſſed no abhorrence, ſo neither did he expreſs any approbation of them; as his way was when he diſſented from[x] perſons of the church, with whom he held communion. So we may fairly ſet one negative argument againſt another. 3. There might be ſpecial reaſons, why, in that particular caſe, he did not launch out into ſatyr and invective againſt the ebionites. He was endeavouring to perſuade Trypho, to come ſo far at leaſt as the ebionites had done, rather than continue an hardened and deſperate Jew. It would have been highly improper, in the conducting an argument of that kind[y], to have fallen ſeverely from the ebionites, whoſe tenets he was making ſo good uſe of[z]. 4. Yet even in that very paſſage, he gave oblique intimations of his heartily diſapproving the ebionite principles. He rebukes Trypho and his aſſociates with ſome tartneſs, as ſhutting their eyes againſt the truth, and being ſlow to perceive the things of God, for their not admitting

[w] Ἢ καὶ τὸν κόσμον σὺ ἀγέννητον λέγεις; εἰσὶν οἱ λέγοντες, ἀ μέντοι γε αὐτοῖς συγκατατίθεμαι ἐγώ. Juſt. Dial. p. 20. alias 148.

[x] Vid. Juſtin. Dial. p. 243. alias 311.

[y] See Thirlby, upon the paſſage, p. 243.

[z] See a like argument urged by Novatian from the doctrine of the docetæ; which he heartily deteſted, but yet contented himſelf, in that inſtance, while making uſe of it, with ſaying, *Quod tamen nos non probamus*, (C. 23.) which was ſufficient. More would have been there and then improper.

admitting the divinity of Jeſus Chriſt, ſo fully proved from the Old Teſtament. What then could he think of the ebionites, who had both Old Teſtament and New before them, and yet rejected their Lord's divinity[a]? Then again, in the cloſe of the ſame paſſage, Juſtin plainly enough intimates, that thoſe who denied Chriſt's divinity, or birth of a virgin, rejected the doctrine of the church, and of the prophets, and of Chriſt himſelf, to follow human inventions, or doctrines of men[b]. So if Juſtin did not condemn the ebionites with hard words, he did it with hard arguments, which were altogether as forcible, and ſerved his purpoſe better. Upon the whole therefore, nothing can be inferred, from this paſſage of Juſtin, to countenance the receiving of the ebionites, or their ſucceſſors, to chriſtian communion. The contrary is evident as the light. And, indeed it would be hard to ſay for what purpoſe Juſtin wrote that very dialogue (the main ſubſtance whereof is taken up in proving the divinity of Chriſt) if after all he thought it an article of ſlight moment, and ſuch as was not of weight ſufficient to be made a term of chriſtian communion. But enough of this.

Biſhop Bull's anſwer to Epiſcopius has met with the eſteem of the learned world[c], and nothing like a juſt reply has been attempted ſince.

[a] Compare Bull, C. vii. ſ. 4. p. 344.
[b] Compare Bull, ibid. p. 347.
[c] See Nelſon's Life of Bull, p. 383, &c.

ſince. Only Le Clerc, about twenty years after, writing an eccleſiaſtical hiſtory [d], was pleaſed in paſſing to make ſome brief ſtrictures upon it, and to bring up again ſome of the former pretences, which had long been exploded. He deals more in hints, and inſinuations, than in arguments, or direct aſſertions, like one who had an inclination to put ſome fallacy upon his readers, but at the ſame time to provide for a retreat. He hints, [e] that the perſons whom Juſtin there ſpeaks of, might be nazaræans. He was very ſenſible where the difficulty preſſed, if they were ſuppoſed to be ebionites; as Biſhop Bull had fully proved them to have been. But whether they are to be called ebionites, or nazaræans, they were undoubtedly men that denied Chriſt's divinity, and his birth of a virgin, (as before ſhewn) and were therefore heretics in eccleſiaſtical account. As to nazaræans, about whom ſo much has been boaſted of late [f], it will be ſoon enough to conſider how far Juſtin had a view to them, when it can be proved, that their principles, with reſpect to Chriſt, were the ſame with thoſe which Juſtin there condemns. A hard thing to make out [g].

Le

[d] Publiſhed A. D. 1716.

[e] Non conſtare an ii, ſeu Nazaræi, ſeu quicunque alii fuerint, negarent, præter hominem ex hominibus natum, quidquam in Jeſu fuiſſe; hoc eſt, divinam ejus naturam rejicerent, neque enim perſpicue hic loquitur Juſtinus. Cleric. Eccl. Hiſt. p. 635.

[f] By Zuicker, Sandius, Toland, Artemonius, and others.

[g] Vid. Moſheim Vindic. antiq. Diſc. adverſ. Toland. C. 5, 6. Buddeus Eccl. Apoſtol. p. 345—550. Moſheim Hiſt. Eccl. Sæc. 1. par. 2. ſ. i. C. 4. p. 99. Conf.

Le Clerc would appear to doubt, whether the perſons pointed to in Juſtin, really denied Chriſt's divine nature or no. It is as plain as poſſible, that they did. But however if they did not, then there is an end of all the remonſtrant pretences at once: and there is not ſo much as colour left for ſaying, that Juſtin held communion with the impugners of Chriſt's divinity.

He goes on to obſerve how mildly and ſoftly Juſtin treated them [h], above common heretics, whom he allowed not to be chriſtians. This is the old epiſcopian plea [i], which had been abundantly anſwered by Biſhop Bull, as Le Clerc well knew; though he took no notice. Neither does it appear that Juſtin believed the ebionites (of whom he ſpeaks) to have been Chriſtians in any other ſenſe than as other heretics were, that is, nominal chriſtians, as I have obſerved above.

He proceeds to ſay, that it cannot be determined, for want of ancient evidences, how far thoſe nazaræans (for ſo he chuſes to call them) were tolerated [k]. Directly falſe, or ſophiſtical.

Conf. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 547.
Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. ii. ſ. 13, 14, 15, 16. Primit. Trad. C. i. ſ. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
Huetius in not. ad Origen. comment. p. 74.
Lequien. diſſert. Damaſcen. vii. p. 94, &c.

[h] Eum minime in eos invectum, ut in Baſilidianos, Saturnilianos, Valentinianos, et Marcionitas, quos Chriſtianos fuiſſe negat. ibid. p. 635.

[i] Reſponſ. ad Specim. Calumn. p. 296.

[k] Sed quatenus eos ferrent alii Chriſtiani, aut quî ipſi ſe erga alios gererent, ob veterum monumentorum penuriam, nobis non conſtat. p. 636.

phiſtical. Indeed, as to nazaræans, ſince it is diſputable who, or what they were, or how far orthodox[l], (accounts being different, and ſometimes repugnant) it may be diſputable how they were received by other chriſtians. But as to ſuch perſons as Juſtin ſpeaks of, (whatever name we aſſign them) men that denied Chriſt's divinity, and miraculous conceptiou, it is a very clear caſe and fully atteſted by many and undoubted evidences, that they never were received by the church of Chriſt, but conſtantly rejected as antichriſts, and heretics. And this is all that we need contend for. The reſt is only playing with words and names, and is mere amuſement, wide of the point in hand.

He goes on to infer, that ſince Juſtin was ſo moderate in that caſe, there is no reaſon now for condemning the ſocinians or others that impugn Chriſt's divinity. That is plainly his drift and meaning, only a little covertly expreſſed[m]. So, though he had neither anſwered, nor

[l] Though I ſay diſputable, becauſe very learned men have been much divided about the nazaræans, yet I make no queſtion myſelf, but the nazaræans were the remains of the firſt chriſtians of Jeruſalem, were intirely orthodox in the article of Chriſt's divinity, and directly oppoſite to the ebionites. So far, at leaſt, Biſhop Bull and Lequien have, in my judgment, clearly and ſatisfactorily proved. So that to obtrude the nazaræans upon us here, inſtead of ebionites, is only raiſing a miſt, to confound weak readers.

[m] Interim cum Juſtinus de ejuſmodi hominibus, non exiguo errore laborantibus, tantâ verborum moderatione loquatur, invidia non eſt iis facienda, qui Jeſum non tantum Meſſiam, ſed etiam a ſpiritu ſancto, præter naturæ ordinem, conceptum credentes,

nor conſidered the reaſons offered by Biſhop Bull againſt any ſuch inference from Juſtin's words, nor the ſolutions given to the objections before made, nor indeed had advanced any thing beyond mere ſurmiſes and ſhuffles; yet he draws the ſame concluſion, which the remonſtrants had before done, as if he had proved his point to ſatisfaction.

But leſt he ſhould ſeem intirely to have paſſed over Biſhop Bull's performance, he ſingles out a bypoint[n], (not material in reſpect of the main thing) to conteſt with him. It is the emendation of a word, which Biſhop Bull had offered, and juſtified, like a judicious writer and a true critic, to make his author ſpeak ſenſe, rather than to ſupport the main cauſe, which did not need it: I ſay, Le Clerc ſingles out that, to diſpute upon, and that is all. And even there he is entirely wrong, as has been abundantly ſhewn by a learned hand[o], for which reaſon I ſhall ſay no more of it. But allowing thoſe gentlemen their abſurd reading, the cauſe ſtands juſt where it did; and they are as far off as ever, from being able to prove from that paſſage in Juſtin martyr, that the ſocinians ſhould be received as fellow chriſtians.

I had

dentes, totumque novum teſtamentum admittentes, et ad ejus normam mores componentes, æternis ſuppliciis addicere non audent; eo tantum quod in arduo capite, de divinâ Chriſti naturâ, a ceteris diſſentiant, quia eam in novi teſtamenti libris doceri non putant. Clerici Eccleſ. Hiſt. p, 636.

[n] Clerici Eccleſ. Hiſtor. p. 636.

[o] Thirlby, in notis ad Juſt. Mart. . 234.

I had almoſt forgot to take notice of two inſinuations dropped by Le Clerc in their favour, viz. That they receive the whole canon (which the ebionites did not) and they lead good moral lives. As to the firſt, it is only maintaining their hereſy with great art, and more exquiſite ſubtlety, and in a way which may do the more miſchief, becauſe the poiſon is concealed. The ancient heretics were plainer men. Beſides, any one who has ſeen the five letters of inſpiration, and knows alſo what freedom that author has taken with the ſacred writers, in his comments, and elſewhere, will conceive no high opinion of his veneration for the ſcriptures. It is keeping them indeed, for the ſaving of appearances, but in order to expoſe them the more inſidiouſly.

As to a good moral life, that is, a partial obedience, it avails nothing, while maintaining of hereſies is itſelf immoral practice, both againſt God and man. Beſides that the natural conſequence of ſocinianiſm is deiſm; which leads to all immorality. And this diſtant, and almoſt inſenſible way of introducing immorality is the moſt dangerous of any. For, thouſands perhaps may be thus led by ſlow and almoſt imperceptible degrees into it, who could not have been brought to it by the ſhorter, coarſer methods. But I paſs on.

There is another gentleman, who after Le Clerc, has appeared on the ſame ſide. He calls himſelf Artemonius in his laſt piece[p], as in another,

[p] Initium evangelii S. Joannis reſtitutum per L. M. Artemonium, A. D. 1726.

another, long before, Lucas Mellierus, and is known to be Samuel Crellius, deſcended from the famous John Crellius. He hath here acted a more ungenerous part than Le Clerc himſelf had done. He pretends, firſt, that Le Clerc, (who had ſcarce touched the main things, as I have ſhewn) had confuted Biſhop Bull; and next inſinuates, that the biſhop had laid violent hands upon the text of Juſtin, only to ſerve his hypotheſis: which is untrue in both its parts. For, the biſhop's correction is undoubtedly right: or if it were not, yet nothing depends upon it, the main cauſe being perfectly ſecure without it. In the laſt place, he takes notice of Mr. Thirlby's reply to Le Clerc, and contents himſelf with a kind of faint promiſe to make ſome rejoinder[q]. I ſhall only remark, that when a perſon ſo well prepared for any impracticable undertaking (as appears by his ſtrange attempt[r] upon John i. 1) declines

[q] Poſt apoſtolorum tempora, pro chriſtianis in eccleſiâ tolerandis [Ebionæi] habebantur; ut ex illo celebri apud Juſtinum martyrem, in Dial. cum Tryphone, loco p. 267. eſt manifeſtum. Quem Georg. Bullus magno conatu fruſtra convellere nititur, et violentam ei infert manum, vocem ἡμιτέρῳ, quia ſuæ hypotheſi eſt contraria, in ὑμιτέρῳ mutans, confutatus etiam a celeberr. Clerico Hiſt. Eccl. ad ann. cxl. Cui quidem vir clariſſ. Styanus Thirlby pro Bullo reſpondit. Verum ſint quæ Thirlbyo reponi, et præterea plura in hanc rem afferri poſſent: quod fortaſſe aliquando fiet, &c. Artemonius, p. 516.

[r] It is an attempt to make an emendation (θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος, inſtead of θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) againſt all the manuſcripts of the New Teſtament, againſt all the verſions, againſt all the quotations from antiquity, in a very critical paſſage, (where, if any where, ſome remains of ſuch a reading would have been preſerved among ebionites, ſamoſatenians, arians, or others, had it ever been known) by mere dint of wit, and force of fancy, without any foundation of reaſon, or authority.

clines venturing, and promiſes only, and that faintly too, where he has a ſtrong inclination, it is a certain ſign, that he apprehends more difficulty than ordinary; and that while he verbally triumphed over Biſhop Bull, he was wiſer than to engage in cloſe diſpute.

The reader, I hope, will pardon me for dwelling ſo long upon this paſſage in Juſtin. I thought it worth the conſidering with ſome care: and I have endeavoured to be as ſhort as the nature of the queſtion would permit me to be. I am ſenſible after all, that I have not taken compaſs enough to do full juſtice to it; and therefore I intreat the reader, who would have intire ſatisfaction about it, to conſult Biſhop Bull himſelf, in whom he will find it.

A. D. 176. About this time[s], very probably, the famous Irenæus wrote his treatiſe againſt hereſies: and he is the firſt that condemns the ebionites by name; and that not merely for being immoral men, nor merely for rejecting a great part of the ſacred canon, neither yet for denying Chriſt's birth of a virgin, but for impugning Chriſt's divinity. He excludes them from church communion, and from a ſtate of grace and ſalvation, chiefly, or ſolely, upon that ſcore. He writes thus: "The ſpiritual man will paſs judg-
"ment alſo upon the ebionites. How can they
"be

[s] Vid. Oudin. de Scriptor. Eccleſ. Vol. 1. p. 207. Dodwell. Diſſert. iv. 360. Fabric. Bibl. Gr. L. v. C. 1. p. 66.

" be ſaved, unleſs it was God (ὁ θεὸς) that " wrought their ſalvation on earth? or how ſhall " man come to God, if God had not come to " man[t]?" Irenæus here lays the charge upon the fundamental error of the Ebionites, their rejecting Chriſt's divinity; an error which they had imbibed from their countrymen the Jews, and brought with them into chriſtianity. And this was the principal ground and reaſon of their rejecting ſome of the goſpels, particularly St. John's. For they had not yet learned the art of reconciling the doctrine of the New Teſtament with their principles. Irenæus excludes the men from ſalvation for their diſbelief, abſtracting from the conſideration of invincible ignorance, or ſincerity; which would be impertinently brought in with reſpect to this or that particular caſe, ſince it is common to all, and makes no difference as to the abſtract nature of things, or our judgment thereupon. For we are to judge by what we know, leaving things ſecret to God. The ebionites are here cenſured as rejecting ſalvation, becauſe they rejected the belief of the divine methods appointed for it; agreeable to a maxim before laid down by Ignatius, and before him by St. John, as I have obſerved above[u].

Before

[t] Ἀναχρινεῖ δὲ καὶ τὲς Ἑβιώνας· πῶς δύνανται σωθῆναι, ἐι μὴ ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ τὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτῶν ἐπὶ γῆς ἐργασάμενος; ἢ πῶς ἄνθρωπος χωρήσει εἰς θεὸν, εἰ μὴ ὁ θεὸς ἐχωρήθη εἰς ἄνθρωπον; Iren. L. iv. C. 33. alias 53.

[u] See above, p. 279, 280.

Before I proceed further with Irenæus, I would here take notice by the way, how conſiderable a perſon he was. He is ſaid to have been near the apoſtles times[u]; for indeed he was born in, or near that age[w], and was advanced in[x] years when he wrote his book againſt hereſies. The chariſmata, the miraculous gifts were common in his days, and he himſelf a witneſs of them in many inſtances. The gifts of healing (as reſtoring ſight to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, and limbs to the cripple, yea and life to the dead) continued in the church to his time; beſides the gift of tongues, and of prophecy, and of caſting out devils, and the like[y]. He ſpeaks twice of raiſing the dead, and in one place very emphatically thus: "And now, as "I before ſaid, the dead have riſen, and have "continued with us many years[z]:" thoſe very gifts are what Irenæus more than once appeals to, as proofs of the true faith reſting in the church, in oppoſition to heretics who had not the extraordinary graces, but were detected in their impoſture, whenever they pretended

[u] Ὁ ἐγγὺς τῶν Ἀποστόλων γενόμενος. Baſil. de Sp. S. C. 29. Ὁ τῶν Ἀποστόλων διάδοχος. Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 2. Epiphan. Hær. H. xxiv. 8. Vir Apoſtolicorum Temporum. Hieron. Epiſt. liii. ad Theodorum. p. 581.

[w] See Dodwell Diſſert. in Iren. Diſſ. iii. p. 229. Addenda, p. 500.

[x] Dodwell Diſſert. iv. p. 291. Oudin. Vol. 1. p. 207.

[y] Vid. Iren. L. 2. C. 31. p. 164. alias C. 56. p. 188. L. ii. C. 32. alias 57. L. v. C. 6.

[z] Ἤδη δέ, καθὼς ἔφαμεν, καὶ νεκροὶ ἠγέρθησαν, καὶ παρέμειναν σὺν ἡμῖν ἱκανοῖς ἔτεσι. L. ii. C. 32. p. 166. Conf. Dodwell Diſſert. ii. p. 165, &c.

tended to them[z]. He lays it down as a rule, and a maxim, that truth then went along with the church, becauſe the ſpirit of truth reſted upon it[a]; which is the argument St. Paul himſelf uſes to the like purpoſe[b]: and it was a very good one at that time, and as circumſtances then ſtood[c]. But I return.

Irenæus, in another place, ſmartly reproves the ebionites for denying Chriſt's divinity, and his birth of a virgin[d]. "God therefore became "man, and the Lord himſelf ſaved us, giving "the ſign of the virgin: and not as ſome "now ſay, who preſume to interpret the ſcrip- "ture, *Behold a young woman ſhall be with* "*child, and ſhall bear a ſon*; as Theodotion the "Epheſian, and Aquila of Pontus, both of "them

[z] Iren. L. ii. C. 31, 32.

[a] Ubi enim eccleſia, ibi et Spiritus Dei, et ubi Spiritus Dei illic eccleſia, et omnis gratia: Spiritus autem veritas. Iren. L. iii. C. 24. alias 40.

[b] Gal. iii. 2.

[c] Nihil ergo prorſus video quod in hoc Irenæi noſtri teſtimonio deſiderare poſſint adverſarii. Ut enim eccleſiis omnibus ſic ſolis datas fuiſſe gratias teſtatur Irenæus, nullis nimirum hæreticorum aliorumve quorumcunque infidelium conventiculis. Inde ſequitur, ut falſam fuiſſe hæreticorum fidem, ſic contra eccleſiæ orthodoxam, divino conſtitiſſe teſtimonio. Quæ utinam cogitarent ſociniani, aliique hodierni omnes a primævorum Chriſtianorum doctrinâ in fide novatores. Dodwell Diſſ. ii. p. 168.

[d] Ὁ θεὸς ἓν ἄνθρωπος ἐγένετο· καὶ αὐτὸς κύριος ἔσωσεν ἡμᾶς, δὺς τὸ τῆς παρθένου σημεῖον· ἀλλ' οὐχ ὡς ἔνιοι φασὶ τῶν νῦν μεθερμηνεύειν τολμώντων τὴν γραφήν· ἰδοὺ ἡ νεᾶνις ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱὸν, ὡς Θεοδοτίων ἡρμήνευσεν ὁ Ἐφέσιος, καὶ Ακύλας ὁ Ποντικὸς· ἀμφότεροι Ιουδαῖοι προσήλυτοι· οἷς κατακολουθησαντες οἱ Ἐβιωναῖοι, ἐκ τοῦ Ιωσὴφ αὐτὸν γεγενῆσθαι φάσκουσι, tantam diſpoſitionem Dei diſſolventes, quantum ad ipſos eſt, fruſtrantes prophetarum teſtimonium quod operatus eſt Deus. L. iii. C. 21. alias 24.

" them Jewiſh proſelytes, interpret. Whom the " ebionites following, pretend he was begotten " of Joſeph, thereby diſſolving, ſo far as in " them lies, that ſo important diſpenſation of " God, and fruſtrating the prediction of the " prophets which God has brought about." Here it is obſervable how ſtrong the expreſſion is, God (ὁ θεὸς) became man, and the Lord himſelf ſaved us. So far in oppoſition to the ebionites, with reſpect to their denial of Chriſt's divinity. The reſt relates to their denial of his miraculous conception. Could any one judge from his ſmart reproof of them in the cloſe, that thoſe men were received as chriſtian brethren in that age? Abſurd and incredible.

I would only take notice further, that ſome over cenſorious critics have ſuſpected that Irenæus was here out in his chronology, and inconſiſtent with himſelf, in making the ebionites to be followers of Aquila and Theodotion. But Irenæus is to be underſtood of the ebionites of his own time only [d]. The ſect had ſubſiſted long before, but now received freſh countenance and encouragement from the verſions of Aquila and Theodotion, which they greedily cloſed in with, as favouring their hereſy.

There is a third paſſage in Irenæus, where he again falls upon the Ebionites, for their oppoſing Chriſt's divinity, and birth of a virgin [e]. " Vain

[d] Vid. Moſheim Vindic. Antiq. C. vii. p. 179, 180.

[e] Vani autem et ebionæi, unitionem Dei et hominis per fidem non recipientes in ſuam animam, ſed in veteri generationis

" Vain alſo are the ebionites, in not receiving the " union of God and man, by faith, into their " ſouls, but perſiſting ſtill in the old leaven of " [common] generation: for they will not un- " derſtand, that the holy ſpirit came upon " Mary, and the *power of the Higheſt overſha-* " *dowed her*, and therefore that which was born " of her is *holy*, and is the Son of the Higheſt, " of God the Father of all, who wrought his " incarnation, and manifeſted a new genera- " tion; that as by the firſt generation we had " inherited death, ſo by this other generation " we might inherit life. They then reject the " mixture of heavenly wine, content to be no " more than earthly water, not taking God " into their mixture, but abiding only in Adam " who was vanquiſhed and expelled paradiſe. " They conſider not, that as at the beginning " of

tionis perſeverantes fermento; neque intelligere volentes, quoniam ſpiritus ſanctus advenit in Mariam, et virtus altiſſimi obumbravit eam: quapropter et quod generatum eſt, Sanctum eſt, et Filius altiſſimi, Dei Patris omnium, qui operatus eſt incarnationem ejus, et novam oſtendit generationem; uti quemadmodum per priorem generationem mortem hæreditavimus, ſic per generationem hanc hæreditaremus vitam. Reprobant itaque hi commixtionem vini cæleſtis, et ſolam aquam ſecularem volunt eſſe, non recipientes Deum ad commixtionem ſuam; perſeverantes autem in eo qui victus eſt, Adam, et projectus eſt de paradiſo: non contemplantes, quoniam quemadmodum ab initio plaſmationis noſtræ in Adam, ea quæ fuit a Deo adſpiratio vitæ, unita plaſmati, animavit hominem, et animal rationale oſtendit; ſic in fine Verbum Patris et Spiritus Dei adunitus antiquæ ſubſtantiæ plaſmationis adæ, viventem et perfectum effecit hominem, capientem perfectum Patrem: ut quemadmodum in animali omnes mortui ſumus, ſic in ſpirituali omnes vivificemur. Iren. L. v. C. 1. p. 293. alias p. 394.

" of our formation in Adam, the breath of life " from God, united with the frame, inlivened " the man, and rendered him a rational crea- " ture; ſo at the end, the word of the Father " and Spirit of God, united with the old ſub- " ſtance of Adam's formation, has made a " living and perfect man comprehending the " perfect Father; that as in the natural man " we are all dead, ſo in the ſpiritual man, we " may all be made alive."

Here we are to obſerve, that Irenæus judged the ebionites to be in a dangerous or deſperate ſtate, on the account of their not admitting the union of God and man in the perſon of Chriſt, on account of their not taking the divine nature in, to ſupply the imperfections of the human, the Word of the Father, the Spirit of God to enliven and exalt the human nature, the old Adam. I may remark by the way, that Irenæus here ſeems to underſtand Spirit of God, and Holy Spirit before, of the ſecond perſon, of the Logos himſelf coming down upon the virgin. So the earlieſt fathers commonly do[f], interpreting Luke i. 35. to that ſenſe:

[f] Hoc ergo Corpus, in quod inductus eſt Spiritus Sanctus, &c. Herm. L. iii. Simul. 5. C. 6.

Ὧν μὲν τὸ πρῶτον πνεῦμα, ἐγένετο σάρξ. Clem. Ep. 2da. C. 9.

Τὸ πνεῦμα ἦν, καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τὴν παρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐδὲν ἄλλο νοῆσαι θέμις, ἢ τὸν λόγον. Juſtin. Mart. Apol. 1. p. 54. alias 75.

Προελθὼν δὲ ὁ λόγος, δημιουργίας αἴτιος, ἔπειτα καὶ ἑαυτὸν γεννᾷ, ὅταν ὁ λόγον σὰρξ γένηται. Clem. Alex. Strom. L. v. p. 654.

Qua autum Spiritus Dei et Virtus Altiſſimi, non poteſt infra angelos haberi. Tertul. de Carn. Chriſti. C. xiv.

Eccè,

ſenſe: which I the rather note, becauſe ſo their aſſerting Chriſt's birth of a virgin, and his preexiſting as Spirit of God, and God, amounted to the ſame thing. For the reaſon given by St. Luke, (or rather by the angel in St. Luke) why Mary ſhould conceive, though ſhe knew not a man, is, that the *Holy Spirit ſhould come upon her*, that the *Power of the Higheſt* (δύναμις ὑψίςου) ſhould *overſhadow* her. So that, after this, to deny the birth of a virgin, amounted, in conſtruction, to the ſame with denying any ſuch coming of an Holy Spirit upon Mary, any divine preexiſtence of Chriſt. And hence, I conceive, it is that we ſo often find, in the ancient fathers, thoſe two doctrines ſo linked together, or ſo intermingled with each other, that they appear, in a manner, but as the ſame thing twice told, or the ſame doctrine diverſely expreſſed. The ebionites

Ecce, inquiunt, ab angelo prædicatum eſt, *propterea quod naſcetur Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei:* caro itaque nata eſt, caro utique erit Filius Dei. Immo, de Spiritu Dei dictum eſt. Certè enim de Spiritu Sancto Virgo concepit; et quod concepit, id peperit: id ergo naſci habebat quod erat conceptum et pariendum; id eſt Spiritus, cujus et vocabitur nomen Emmanuel, quod eſt interpretatum *nobiſcum Deus.* Caro autem Deus non eſt, ut de illâ dictum ſit *quod naſcetut Sanctum, vocabitur Filius Dei,* ſed ille qui in eâ natus eſt, Deus.—Quis Deus in eo natus? Sermo et Spiritus. Tertul. contr. Prax. C. 27.

Verbum Dei incarnatum per Spiritum illum de quo angelus refert, Spiritus veniet in te, &c.—Ut principalitas nominis iſtius, Filius Dei, in Spiritu ſit Domini qui deſcendit et venit. Novat. C. xx.

Hic in Virgine labitur, carne Spiritus Sanctus induitur. Cyprian. de Idolor. vanit. ſic. Cod. German. et 4. MSS. Pamel.

Deſcendens itaque de cœlo Sanctus ille Spiritus, ſanctum Virginem, cujus utero ſe inſinuaret, elegit. Lactant. L. iv. C. 12.

ebionites denied the deſcent of the Logos upon Mary: they rejected the divine part in Chriſt, admitting only the human. This is what Irenæus calls rejecting the heavenly wine (alluding to their celebrating the euchariſt in water only, without wine[a]) not receiving God into their mixture, but contenting themſelves with the earthly Adam, who was caſt out of paradiſe; intimating that the ebionites ſhould as certainly be excluded heaven. The thought which Irenæus goes upon, may be illuſtrated from a paſſage in Hippolytus, which, ſpeaking of Chriſt, runs thus: "As it was propheſied beforehand, "ſo he manifeſted himſelf of the Virgin and Holy "Spirit; made a new man (a ſecond Adam) having an heavenly nature of the Father, as he is "the Logos, and having an earthly one, as of "the old Adam, incarnate of a virgin. He came "into the world, and manifeſted himſelf as "God[b]." But to return to Irenæus, it is very plain, that he looked upon the reconciliation of God and man, as depending intirely upon the Mediator's being both in one[c]. And in how ſtrict a ſenſe he underſtood Chriſt to be God, is well known to as many as know any thing of

[a] Epiphan. Hær. xxx. 16. Conf. Philaſtr. 77. p. 146.

[b] Καθ' ὃν ὃν τρόπον ἐκηρύχθη, κατὰ τοῦτον καὶ παρὼν ἐφανέρωσεν ἑαυτὸν ἐκ παρθένου καὶ ἁγίου πνεύματος, καινὸς ἄνθρωπος γενόμενος· τὸ μὲν ἐπάνιον ἔχων τὸ πατρῶον ὡς λόγος, τὸ δὲ ἐπίγειον, ὡς ἐκ παλαιοῦ Ἀδὰμ διὰ παρθένου σαρκούμενος, ἵνα προελθὼν εἰς κόσμον θεὸς ἐφανερώθη. κ. τ. λ. Hippolyt contr. Noet. C. 17. p. 18, 19. Conf. Tertullian. de Carn. Chriſti. C. 17.

[c] Vid. Iren. L. iii. C. 18. alias 20.

of Irenæus. But if the Engliſh reader deſires farther ſatisfaction on that head, he may have it abundantly from Mr. Alexander's eſſay on Irenæus[a], a very judicious and faithful performance, a finiſhed piece in its kind. I heartily wiſh that that learned gentleman had leiſure, as he has abilities, to draw out more of the fathers in the ſame way.

A. D. 206. Tertullian reckons the ebionites among the antichriſts, for denying Jeſus to be Son of God[b], that is, for impugning the divinity of Chriſt. For that Tertullian underſtood the phraſe of *Son of God* as applied to Chriſt, to mean the ſame as *God of God*[c], is plain from all his writings. And what he muſt think of the dangerous ſtate the ebionites were in, by their hereſy in that article, may appear ſufficiently from a maxim he lays down, that none have life who believe not in the Son, and none believe in the Son, who admit not that he is a Son[d] in ſuch a ſenſe as he had mentioned.

He

[a] Printed for John Clarke and Richard Hett, A. D. 1727.

[b] At in epiſtolâ eos maxime antichriſtos vocat qui Chriſtum negarent in carne veniſſe, et qui non putarent Jeſum eſſe Filium Dei: illud Marcion, hoc Hebion vindicavit. Tertul. Præſcript. C. 33.

[c] Hunc ex Deo prolatum dicimus, et prolatione generatum, et idcirco *Filium Dei* et *Deum* dictum, ex unitate ſubſtantiæ.—Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et *de Deo Deus*, ut lumen de lumine accenſum.—Quod de Deo profectum eſt, Deus eſt, et Dei Filius, et unus ambo. Ita de Spiritu Spiritus, et de Deo Deus, &c. Tertul. Apol. C. 21.

[d] Qui Filium non habet, nec vitam habet: non habet autem Filium, qui eum alium quam Filium credit. Contr. Prax. C. 30.

He again cenſures the ebionites, as making Chriſt a mere man, and denying that he is the Son of God[e]. Where it is obſervable he paſſes over in ſilence their denying his birth of a virgin, or condemns both their poſitions in one, as reſolving into the ſame error. However, the ſtreſs of his cenſure lies upon their impugning Chriſt's divine ſonſhip, that is, his real and proper divinity: for ſuch was Tertullian's ſenſe of Son of God, as I before intimated.

In another place, he ſpeaks of the ebionites as denying Chriſt's birth of a virgin, but makes that amount to denying his being Son of God[f], in his high ſenſe of that phraſe. And the reaſon why the denial of the one implied the denial of the other, (in his way of arguing, common to other fathers) ſeems to have been this; that it would have been utterly unworthy [g]of the Son of God to have taken man upon him, except

[e] Quâ autem Spiritus Dei, et virtus altiſſimi, non poteſt infra angelos haberi, Deus ſcilicet et Dei Filius. Quanto ergo dum hominem geſtat minor angelis factus eſt, tanto non dum angelum geſtat. Poterit hæc opinio Hebioni convenire, qui nudum hominem et tantum ex ſemine David, id eſt non et Dei Filium conſtituit Jeſum. Tertullian. de Carn. Chriſti, C. 14.

[f] Non competebat ex ſemine humano Dei Filium naſci, ne ſi totus eſſet Filius hominis, non eſſet et Dei Filius, nihilque haberet amplius Solomone, et amplius Jona, et de Hebionis opinione credendus erat. Ergo jam Dei Filius ex Patris Dei ſemine, id eſt Spiritu; vacabat enim viri ſemen apud habentem Dei ſemen. Tertullian. de Carn. Chriſti. C. 18.

[g] Ante omnia autem commendanda erit ratio quæ præfuit, ut Dei Filius de virgine naſceretur. Nove naſci debebat novæ nativitatis dedicator.—Concepit igitur virgo et peperit Emanuelem, nobiſcum Deum. Hæc eſt nativitas nova dum homo naſcitur

except it were by a virgin: therefore the denial of the mother's virginity amounted to a denial of God's being born of her; it was making it abſurd. From whence we ſee a further reaſon of what I before hinted, that the two falſe poſitions of the ebionites were conſidered as near allied, and were condemned in one, as hanging both together, and perhaps one invented for the ſake of the other[h]. The denying the miraculous conception was, by inference and implication, denying Chriſt's divinity, as the affirming of the one was conceived to amount to affirming the other. But the later ebionites (as we ſhall ſee) having a mind to reform their ſcheme, contrived at length to admit the miraculous conception, and ſtill rejected our Lord's divinity: which was retaining the main ſubſtance of their hereſy, but under a better appearance than before. We ſhall obſerve preſently what the church of Chriſt thought of them after that new reform.

A. D. 249. Origen is the firſt that takes notice of the ebionites as divided into two ſorts[i], one denying, as before, Chriſt's birth of a virgin,

naſcitur in Deo, in quo homine Deus natus eſt; carne antiqui ſeminis ſuſceptâ ſine ſemine antiquo, ut illam novo ſemine, id eſt ſpiritaliter [fort. ſpiritali] reformaret, excluſis antiquitatis ſordibus, expiatam. Tertul. de Carn. Chriſti. C. 17.

[h] See what the learned Vitringa ſays of Cerinthus's denying the miraculous conception, Obſerv. Sacr. L. v. C. 12. ſ. 6. p. 145, 146. Edit. ult.

[i] Οὗτοι δὲ εἰσὶν οἱ διττοὶ Ἐβιωναῖοι, ἤτοι ἐκ παρθένου ὁμολογοῦντες ὁμοίως ἡμῖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν, ἢ οὐκ ἔτω γεγεννῆσθαι, ἀλλ' ὡς τοὺς λοιποὺς ἀνθρώπους. Orig. contr. Celſ. p. 272. Conf. comment. in Matth. p. 427.

a virgin, the other admitting it. But ſtill he reckons both among the pretended chriſtians[k], and introduces them among other heretics[l]. But whether or no he charged them with hereſy on account of their denying our Lord's divinity, would not certainly appear, if he had not expreſſed himſelf more fully in ſome other of his writings. In his comment upon St. Matthew, he takes the like notice of the two ſorts of ebionites, charging both as rejecting Chriſt's divinity[m], and as poor in faith[n] towards Chriſt Jeſus; alluding to their name, which ſignifies the ſame as poor. But Pamphilus, in his apology for Origen, produces ſome paſſages of his, out of his comments on the epiſtle to Titus, where he condemns the ebionites more expreſsly, as heretics, for their denying Chriſt's divinity[o]. As to any doubt which may be made about Pamphilus's apology, (appearing only in Ruffinus's verſion) and the

[k] Orig. ibid. p. 272. [l] P. 271, 272, 274.

[m] Οὐ μὴν καὶ μετὰ τῆς περὶ αὐτῦ θεολογίας, Comm. in Matt. p. 427.

[n] Τῶ Ἐβιωναίω πτωχέυοντι περὶ τὴν εἰς Ιησῦν πίςιν. ibid. p. 428.

[o] Quid vero ſit hæreticus homo, pro viribus noſtris, ſecundum quod ſentire poſſumus, deſcribamus. Omnis qui ſe Chriſto credere profitetur et tamen alium Deum legis et prophetarum, alium evangeliorum Deum dicit, &c.—hujuſmodi homines hæreticos deſignamus—unum idemque credendum eſt de eo qui de Domino noſtro Jeſu Chriſto falſi aliquid ſenſerit: ſive ſecundum eos qui dicunt eum ex Joſeph et Mariâ natum, ſicut ſunt Hebionitæ et Valentiniani; ſive ſecundum eos qui primogenitum eum negant et totius creaturæ Deum, et Verbum, et ſapientiam quæ eſt initium viarum Dei, antequam aliquid fieret ante ſæcula fundatam, atque ante omnes colles generatam, ſed hominem ſolum eum credentes. Pamphil. Apolog. p. 226. Ed. Bened. Conf. Comment. in Joann. p. 397.

the credit due to it, I refer the reader to Biſhop Bull, who has largely diſcuſſed that queſtion, and has ſufficiently maintained the authority of that verſion[p]. As to Origen's own orthodoxy in the article of Chriſt's divinity, it has been abundantly vindicated, and cleared from all reaſonable exception[q].

A. D. 290. I ſhall add but one writer more, Victorinus Petavionenſis, before referred to as ſaying, that St. John wrote his goſpel againſt Ebion, among others who were of the ſchool of Satan[r]. It is very plain, by his manner of expreſſion, that he looked upon Ebion as a very ill man and an heretic, being of Satan's ſchool, and condemned by the apoſtle himſelf. And conſidering how particular St. John is, in ſetting forth the divinity of Chriſt, we cannot doubt but Victorinus's cenſure of Ebion reſpects that article.

I might add many teſtimonies of poſtnicene fathers, to confirm what I have been proving, namely, that the ebionites were conſtantly looked upon as heretics for denying our Lord's divinity. But I chuſe to go no lower than the antenicene writers, becauſe they are ſufficient, and they are the leſs to be excepted to; and I am willing alſo to conſult the eaſe of my readers, as well as to ſpare myſelf needleſs trouble.

[p] Bull, Def. F. N. ſect. ii. C. 9. p. 114, &c.
[q] Biſhop Bull, ſect. ii. C. 9.
Compare my ſecond Defence, Q. xii. p. 347, &c. alias p. 352, &c.
[r] See above, p. 276.

trouble. I am aware of a paſſage in St. Jerome, which ſeems to ſay, that the ebionites and Cerinthians were condemned as heretics upon another account, not relating to our Lord's divinity[s]: and I obſerve, that the learned Le Clerc has endeavoured to make uſe of it[t] for the ſupporting a favourite hypotheſis, which he appears too fond of. But it is very certain, that Jerome's words in that place, if interpreted with utmoſt rigour, are a perfect contradiction to all antiquity, and to what himſelf has aſſerted in other places of his works[u]. Some therefore have greatly blamed S. Jerome[x] for prevaricating in the contradictory account he here gives; while others, more kindly, and I think more juſtly, have endeavoured to bring him off by a candid conſtruction[y]. Whichever way we take, there is nothing concerned in it, except it be

[s] Si hoc verum eſt, in Cerinthi et Ebionis hæreſim delabimur, qui credentes in Chriſto propter hoc ſolum a patribus anathematizati ſunt, quod legis cerimonias Chriſti evangelio miſcuerunt, et ſic nova confeſſi ſunt, ut vetera non amitterent. Quid dicam de Ebionitis qui Chriſtianos eſſe ſe ſimulant? Uſque hodie per totas orientis ſynagogas inter Judæos hæreſis eſt quæ dicitur Minæorum, et a phariſæis nunc uſque damnatur; quos vulgo Nazaræos nuncupant, qui credunt in Chriſtum Filium Dei, natum de Virgine Mariâ, et eum dicunt eſſe qui ſub Pontio Pilato paſſus eſt et reſurrexit, in quem et nos credimus. Sed dum volunt et Judæi eſſe et Chriſtiani, nec Judæi ſunt nec Chriſtiani. Hieron. ad Auguſt. Ep. lxxiv. Opp. Tom. iv. 623. Bened.

[t] Clerici Eccleſ. Hiſtor. p. 477.

[u] See two paſſages quoted above, p. 251, 252. And compare Hieronym. contr. Helvid. Tom. iv. 140.

[x] Moſheim. Vindic. Antiq. contr. Toland. p. 164.

[y] Bull Judic. Eccleſ. C. 2. ſ. 13. p. 300.
Remarks on "Chriſtianity as old, &c" with reſpect to eccleſiaſtical antiquity: firſt part continued, p. 78, 79.

be St. Jerome's character. For as to the cauſe we are upon, it is too firmly eſtabliſhed by the eccleſiaſtical writers in general, and even Jerome in particular (as I before hinted) to be at all weakened by this ſingle paſſage to the contrary, if it were contrary.

Having ſhewn above, as I humbly conceive, that the cerinthians (with whom I would be underſtood to include the ebionites) were condemned by St. John himſelf, for impugning our Lord's divinity, and having proved further, that the ebionites (with whom I would be underſtood to include the cerinthians) were condemned all along in the church for the firſt three centuries; the concluſion I now draw is, that both cerinthians and ebionites ſtand condemned from the days of the apoſtles, and downwards, for the oppoſition they made to that important doctrine. After this, it will be leſs needful to prove that others alſo were condemned in like manner for the like oppoſition to the ſame doctrine. But ſince the doing it may tend in ſome meaſure to confirm what has been ſaid, I ſhall go on to mention other impugners of our Lord's divinity within the three firſt centuries, and a little farther: only, I ſhall endeavour to be as brief as poſſible in the account, not to weary the reader.

A. D. 195. *Theodotus.*

Theodotus a citizen of Byzantium, by trade a currier, but a man of parts, and competently

tently furniſhed with ſecular learning, having denied his Saviour in time of perſecution, and being afterwards upbraided for it, as one that had denied his God; to extenuate the offence, he pretended that he had not denied God, but man[a], for that Chriſt was no more. A miſerable ſalvo for a guilty practice; which inſtead of leſſening his crime, inhanced it yet more, and was ſo far from removing the juſt obloquy he before lay under, that it ſerved only to edge and inforce it. However, he hereupon became the reviver of an old hereſy, or the ringleader of a new one (new in dreſs and circumſtances) and ſoon after called by the new name of the "God denying apoſtaſy[b]." The firſt account we have of this matter is from a nameleſs author in Euſebius, reaſonably ſuppoſed, upon comparing other teſtimonies[c], to have been Caius, the Roman preſbyter, who flouriſhed about A. D. 214. Learned men have inquired how Caius could ſay, that Theodotus was founder of the hereſy[d], and the firſt that made Chriſt a mere man, when it is certain and

[a] Epiphan. Hær. Liv. i. Auguſtin. Hær. 33.
Philaſtr. Hæreſ. C. 50.
Damaſcen Hær. 54.
Synodic. Pappi. C. 3.
Pſeudo Tertullian. Præſcript. C. 53.
Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 5.

[b] Ἀρτεμᾶς ἀποστασία, Euſeb. H. E. L. v. C. 28.

[c] Vid. Pearſon, vindic. Ignat. par. 2. p. 23. Opp. Poſth. p. 147, &c. Cave Hiſtor. Literar. Vol. i. p. 65.

[d] Τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα ταύτης τῆς Ἀρτεμᾶ ἀποστασίας —πρῶτον εἰπόντα ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν χριστόν.—τὸν τῆς αἱρέσεως ταύτης εὑρετήν. Euſeb. ibid.

and manifeſt, that both cerinthians and ebionites had done it before him. Some ſay plainly, that Caius was guilty of a blunder[e]: which indeed is cutting the diſpute ſhort, and may be a good way, if there be not a better. Others ſay, that Theodotus was really the firſt that made Jeſus a mere man, for that the cerinthians and ebionites, before, admitted of a ſuperior nature, a Spirit aſſiſtant from above, reſiding at times in Jeſus, which made him more than a common man[f]. But it will be difficult to prove, either that Ebion was in the ſame ſcheme with Cerinthus, as to the doctrine of æons, and as to the dividing of Jeſus from Chriſt, or that he was not exactly in the ſame principles which Theodotus eſpouſed, as to making Chriſt a mere man. Euſebius's account of the ebionites, and their tenets[g], ſeems to repreſent their ſcheme as being exactly the ſame in that reſpect; and Theodorit is very expreſs for its being ſo[h], only Theodotus's was a little more refined than that of the ancienter ebionites, becauſe he allowed the miraculous conception, or birth of a virgin, which they denied. However, both they and he ſuppoſed Chriſt a mere man: and therefore he was not the

[e] Ittigius de Hæreſiarchis, ſect. ii. C. 15. p. 261.

[f] Vitringa obſervat. Sacr. L. v. C. 10. p. 128. Edit. ult.

[g] Euſeb. E. H. L. iii. C. 27.

[h] Ὁ δὲ Κήρινθος τὸν μὲν Ιησοῦν ἐξ Ιωσὴφ καὶ Μαρίας ἔφησε γεννηθῆναι κατὰ κοινὸν τῶν ἀνθρώπων νόμον, ἄνωθεν δὲ τὸν χριστὸν κατιλελυθότα ἐπὶ τὸν Ιησοῦν. Εβιωναῖοι δὲ καὶ Θεοδοτιανοὶ, καὶ Αρτεμωνιανοὶ, καὶ Φωτεινιανοὶ ψιλὸν ἄνθρωπον εἰρήκασιν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου τὸν χριστὸν γεγεννῆσθαι. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. v. C. 11. p. 278.

the firſt that taught it. Some therefore think that Theodotus is ſaid to be firſt, becauſe he was the firſt among the gentile chriſtians[i]; for Cerinthus and Ebion were of Jewiſh extract: which account appears fair and plauſible. But I conceive, after all, that Caius was not conſidering in that place, who in the church had firſt taught that Chriſt was a mere man, but who had been the founder of ſuch a particular ſect, called Theodotians, or Artemonians, and who had firſt taught them to deny Chriſt, under the pretence of his being a mere man. Theodotus, plainly, was their founder and leader: he was at the head of that revolt, the firſt man that undertook to conduct it, and to ſupport it upon that principle. The other accounts of Theodotus lead to this ſenſe, and in the main, ſay the ſame thing that Caius does. Epiphanius takes notice, that all the other chriſtians who were apprehended and brought to the queſtion along with Theodotus, honeſtly confeſſed Chriſt, and ſuffered[k]: he was the only man of the company, that preſumed to deny him, afterwards inventing an odd ſalvo for it, being more of an artiſt in his way[l], than others were. No one elſe, at that time, and upon that occaſion, durſt venture to deny his God: he was the firſt that

[i] Bull. Judic. C. 3. ſ. 1. p. 304.

[k] Epiphan. Hær. 54. 1.

[l] Οὗτος ἐν παιδείᾳ Ἑλληνικῇ ἄκρος γενόμενος, ἅμα δὲ ἄλλοις τῶν ἐν ἡμέραις τὲ τότε διωγμῷ μόνος ἐκπεσὼν, μαρτυρησάντων ἐκείνων διὰ θεόν. Dameſcen. Hæreſ. 54.

that then broke the ice, and led the way[m], inſtructing others to ſay after him, that it was not denying God, but man. I know not whether in one particular, he may not be thought to have exceeded the irreverence and impiety of Ebion, namely, in his calling Chriſt a mere man, conſidered even in his ſtate of exaltation, when he abjured him. Ebion would have called him God, ſo conſidered, as having been then deified, according to his way of thinking[n]. But Caius probably had no view to any ſuch nicety of diſtinction, but intended only to ſay, that Theodotus was the founder of a new ſect, called afterwards by his name, and teacher alſo of a new doctrine; new as to the circumſtances, and application, though, as to the main ſubſtance of it, borrowed from the ebionites before him, or more particularly from the Alogi, a branch of the ebionites[o].

Having ſeen that Theodotus was an impugner of our Lord's divinity, we are next to obſerve, that he was condemned immediately by the church for it. He was excommunicated by Victor then biſhop of Rome, as an hereſiarch. So

[m] Theodotus quidam, Byzantinus genere, denegator Chriſti Dei noſtri in perſecutione extitit ſalvatoris; qui cœpit dicere, docens ita: "Communis homo erat, ut omnes homines, Chriſtus." Philaſtr. Hær. 50.

Doctrinam introduxit, quâ Chriſtum hominem tantummodo diceret, Deum autem illum negaret. Pſeudo Tertullian, C. 53.

[n] See Hilary de Trin. L. ii N. 4. p. 789. Epip. Hær. xxx. N. 18. p. 142.

[o] Θεοδοτὸς τις, ἀπόσπασμα ὑπάρχων ἐκ τῆς προειρημένης Ἀλόγων αἱρέσεως. Epiphan. Hær. 54.

So the ſame Caius relates[q]. A ſentence approved by the churches of Chriſt: otherwiſe Victor himſelf would have been condemned for it, as he was greatly blamed for miſapplying the eccleſiaſtical cenſure in a caſe of another nature, relating to the time for keeping Eaſter. The churches and biſhops of thoſe times were exceeding watchful, and jealous of any abuſes of power in particular churches, or men. They were as checks one upon another, that nothing of moment ſhould be done by any, which had not the conſent of the reſt. This conduct obliged every one to obſerve the ſtricteſt caution in any affair of general concern, and it tended to keep up the exacteſt harmony and unanimity in the ſeveral churches. But I return.

Hippolytus of the third century, takes notice, in paſſing, of this Theodotus, as a perſon that falſified the truth, and perverted the ſcripture, in order to countenance his erroneous doctrine about Chriſt's being a mere man[r]. He compares the heretic Noetus with Theodotus, to make Noetus the more odious for following ſuch a leader in his manner of writing: ſo that it is plain enough what Hippolytus thought of Theodotus.

The

[q] Βίκτωρ τὸν σκυτέα Θεόδοτον, τὸν ἀρχηγὸν καὶ πατέρα τάυτης τῆς ἀρνησιθέου ἀποστασίας ἀπεκήρυξε τῆς κοινωνίας—ἀπέβαλε Θεόδοτον τὸν τῆς αἱρέσεως ταύτης εὑρετήν. Euſeb. L v. C. 28. Conf. Theod. Hæret. Fab. L. 2. C. 5.

[r] Καὶ ταῦτα βέλονται ὕτω διηγεῖσθαι καὶ αὐτοῖς μονόκωλα χρώμενοι, ὃν τρόπον Θεόδοτος ἄνθρωπον συνιστᾶν ψιλὸν βελόμενος· ἀλλ' ὕτε ἐκεῖνοι τε νενοήκασιν ἀληθὲς, ὐθ' ὕτοι, καθὼς αὐταὶ αἱ γραφαὶ ἐλέγχυσιν αὐτῶν τὴν ἀμαθίαν, μαρτυρῦσαι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ Hippol. contr. Noet. C. 3. p. 7. Conf. Epiphan. Hær. lvii. 2.

The ſame Theodotus is numbered alſo in the liſt of heretics[s] by the writer of the appendix to Tertullian's book of preſcription. That appendix is ſuppoſed by ſome[t] to be little elſe but an extract from our Hippolytus's treatiſe againſt hereſies. However that be, the piece is ancient, and of good value[u]. Theodotus is there charged as a blaſphemer againſt Chriſt, for denying him to be God, though he allowed his birth of a virgin. It was the "God denying" hereſy: and therein lay its eſſential malignity. Had he ſaid, that Chriſt was an angel, or an archangel, or the higheſt of all creatures, it would have been treating our Lord with ſomething more of reſpect; but ſtill it would have come infinitely ſhort of his real dignity, and of the faith of the church concerning him, from the beginning. This I obſerve, leſt any favourer of arianiſm ſhould falſely ſurmiſe, that the cenſures paſſed upon Theodotus and ſuch other impugners of Chriſt's divinity, do not affect thoſe who make Chriſt a glorious creature, but thoſe only who ſuppoſe him a mere man: whereas, in truth, Theodotus and the reſt were condemned for the impugning Chriſt's proper and

[s] Accedit his Theodotus Byzantius, qui poſtea quam pro Chriſti nomine comprehenſus negavit, in Chriſtum blaſphemare non deſtitit, doctrinam enim introduxit quâ Chriſtum hominem tantummodo diceret, Deum autem illum negaret: ex Spiritu quidem ſancto, natum ex Virgine, ſed hominem ſolitarium atque nudum, nullâ aliâ præ cæteris, niſi ſolâ juſtitiæ auctoritate, Pſeudo Tertullian, C. 53.

[t] Allix. Fathers vindicated touching the Trinity, p. 99.

[u] Vid. Dodwell. Diſſert. de Succeſ. Pontif. p. 216.

and eſſential divinity; a fault common to them and the arians, ſo that both are concluded under the ſame cenſure.

I may further add, that the conduct of the church, with reſpect to the praxeans, noetians, and ſabellians, is a demonſtration of the truth of what I ſay. Thoſe men charged the church as teaching three gods[u]. Then would have been the time, and muſt have been, for the church to declare, (had they ever meant it) that the Father only is God, and the Son and Holy Ghoſt creatures. But they ſtudiouſly and conſcientiouſly avoided it, as one ſees in Hippolytus and Tertullian, and others. And if any man uncautiouſly, in debate, happened but to let fall any expreſſions which ſeemed to lean that way, (as appeared in the famous caſe of Dionyſius of Alexandria) the church of that time would not bear it, but rejected every thing of that kind with abhorrence. They diſtinguiſhed themſelves off from ſabellianiſm, but ſo as to avoid the other extreme, afterwards called arianiſm. A plain ſign and proof[x] that the proper divinity of Chriſt was what they aimed to ſupport. I may obſerve alſo by the way, that the ſabellian objection all along ſuppoſed and implied, that the Godhead of the Holy Ghoſt, as well as of the Son, was the then received doctrine. But I return.

There

[u] Tertullian, contr. Prax. C. 3. Epiphan. Hær. lvii. 62.

[x] See this argument excellently drawn out by Mr. Thirlby, Def. of the Anſw. p. 36, &c.

There was another Theodotus, ſurnamed Trapezita (the banker) who was a diſciple of the former, and who endeavoured to refine upon this ſcheme, by the addition of ſome odd conceits concerning Melchizedec. I ſhall only obſerve farther, that as from the elder Theodotus ſome were named theodotians, ſo from the junior Theodotus others were called melchizedecians[x].

A. D. 205. *Artemon.*

Artemon, otherwiſe called Artemas, was a diſciple of Theodotus, a reviver or promoter of the ſame hereſy. He appears to have been a very warm man, and of vaſt aſſurance; or his followers, at leaſt, were ſuch. For they confidently gave it out, that their doctrine was as old as the apoſtles[y], and that the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity began with Pope Zephyrin, that is about A. D. 198. Such ignorance, if it was mere ignorance, was pitiable: but there is too much reaſon to ſuſpect, that they knew better. The nameleſs author in Euſebius (ſuppoſed to be Caius) well urges[z], that beſides the holy ſcriptures, older than all, there were the works of Juſtin and Miltiades, of Tatian and Clemens, of Irenæus and Melito, and a great many more, defenders

[x] Vid. Euſeb. L. v. C. 28. Lequien. not. ad Damaſcen. Hær. 64. Tneodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 6.

[y] Euſeb. L. v. C. 28. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 4.

[z] Euſeb. E. H. L. v. C. 28.

defenders of Chriſt's divinity, directly confronting their wild report, and plainly proving to the world, that it was mere fiction and romance, too improbable to be offered even to the loweſt of the populace. And as to their pleading that Pope Victor, the immediate predeceſſor of Zephyrin, was on their ſide of the queſtion, he confutes them at once, by obſerving, that Victor was the very perſon who had excommunicated Theodotus, their founder and leader, for that very doctrine which they eſpouſed[a]. All I have farther to obſerve of theſe confident men, is, that they were cenſured by the church of their time, and not admitted to communion among faithful chriſtians. That may reaſonably be inferred from what Caius ſays, as before mentioned. But it appears further from what paſſed ſome years after, in the caſe of Paul of Samoſata, when the antiochian fathers cenſured him for hereſy, and ſent him to ſeek communion, if he pleaſed, with the artemonians[b], whoſe ſentiments he had taken into, and whoſe execrable hereſy (ſo they call it[c]) he had revived. To which agrees what Athanaſius ſays, ſpeaking of the arian hereſy. "This here-" ſy," ſays he, "was looked upon as deteſtable, " before

[a] Ἦσαν δὲ ὗτοι ἄμφω Θεοδότου τοῦ σκυτέως μαθηταὶ, τοῦ πρώτου ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ φρονήσει, μᾶλλον δὲ ἀφροσύνῃ, ἀφορισθέντος τῆς κοινωνίας ὑπὸ Βίκτορος, ὡς ἔφην, τοῦ τότε ἐπισκόπου.

[b] Τῷ δὲ Ἀρτεμᾷ ὗτος ἐπισέλλετο· καὶ οἱ τὰ Ἀρτεμᾶ φρονοῦντες, τοῦτο κοινωνείτωσαν. Euſeb. H. E. L. vii. C. 30.

[c] Τῇ μιαρᾷ αἱρέσει τῇ Ἀρτεμᾶ. Euſeb. ibid.

" before the council of Nice, when Artemas " advanced it[d]."

A. D. 242. *Beryllus.*

Beryllus, biſhop of Boſtra in Arabia, has been reputed one of thoſe that once denied the divinity of Chriſt; and therefore Biſhop Bull takes him in among the reſt[e]. But yet ſtrictly ſpeaking, the charge againſt him was not that he denied the divinity of Chriſt, but his " pro- " per divinity[f]:" by which I underſtand his perſonal divinity, or divine perſonality. For Beryllus's notion was, that the man Chriſt Jeſus was the whole perſon, a mere human perſon, which had indeed a divine perſon reſiding in him, viz. the perſon of the Father. So, Beryllus's doctrine was a kind of ſabellianiſm; which however in ſtrictneſs, amounts to a denial of Chriſt's divinity. For while it allows him no diſtinct divine perſonality, all that remains is, the man Chriſt with the Father indwelling; which at length reſolves into the ſame doctrine, in the main, with what Cerinthus, Ebion, Theodotus and Artemon taught as to the proper perſon of Jeſus. It is denying his divine ſonſhip, and divine perſonality, which, in effect, is denying his proper divinity. I the rather note this, becauſe from hence it may appear, that

[d] Πρὸ τῆς Νικαίας, ἡ αἵρεσις ἦν βδελυκτὴ, ὅτι ταύτην Αρτεμᾶς κατεβάλλετο. Athanaſ. de Synod. p. 733. Edit. Bened.

[e] Bull. Judic. C. 2. p. 305.

[f] Μηδὲ μὴν θεότητα ἰδίαν ἔχειν. Euſeb. E. H. L. vi. C. 33.

that the church's condemning Praxeas, Noetus, and Sabellius, as guilty of hereſy, proceeded from the ſame pious zeal for the divinity of Chriſt, as their condemnation of Cerinthus, Ebion, &c. before: for both were intended to preſerve that important article, and to ſecure the baptiſmal faith in a real and divine Trinity. Tertullian was ſharp enough to ſee, that the praxean doctrine, under colour of magnifying Chriſt, by advancing him into the ſame perſonality with the Father, in reality left no diſtinct Son at all, more than the man Jeſus, and ſo fell in with Valentinus's notion, (he might have ſaid, Cerinthus's alſo) which ſeparated Jeſus from Chriſt, dividing them into two perſons[g]. All the difference is, that Cerinthus, or Valentinus ſuppoſed the Chriſt from above to be ſome æon, or inferior power reſiding, occaſionally, with the man Jeſus; while the praxeans ſubſtituted God the Father inſtead of that ſuppoſed æon, making him the Chriſt from above, conceived to inhabit at times the ſame man Jeſus. Which, as it comes very near the old ebionite notion, ſo is it exactly the ſame with what

[g] Undique enim obducti diſtinctione Patris et Filii—aliter eam ad ſuam nihilominus ſententiam interpretari conantur: ut æque in unâ perſonâ utrumque diſtinguant Patrem et Filium; dicentes Filium carnem eſſe, id eſt hominem, id eſt Jeſum; Patrem autem Spiritum, id eſt Deum, id eſt Chriſtum. Et qui unum eundemque contendunt Patrem et Filium, jam incipiunt dividere illos potius quam unare. Si enim alius eſt Jeſus, alius Chriſtus, alius erit Filius, alius Pater; quia Filius Jeſus, et Pater Chriſtus. Talem monarchiam apud Valentinum fortaſſe didicerunt, duos facere Jeſum et Chriſtum. Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 27.

what ſeveral of the foreign ſocinians, and moſt of our Engliſh ones have maintained in late times. Indeed, the praxeans were charged as patripaſſians, which is a charge that does not affect the modern ſocinians: but I apprehend, from the paſſage of Tertullian juſt cited, that the praxeans, to get off from patripaſſianiſm, learned at length to divide the perſons of Father and Son, and then the Father could be conſidered only as inhabiting Jeſus*, a mere man, and a diſtinct perſon from him. Sabellianiſm, and photinianiſm, and ſocinianiſm, do in reality come at length into one; all reſolving into judaiſm: for the fundamental error of them all is the denying the divine ſonſhip, and perſonal divinity of Chriſt; rejecting the eternal ſubſtantial Logos, who was with the Father before the world was, and is God from everlaſting to everlaſting. I ſay then, that the zeal ſhewn by the ancient church againſt the ſabellians of all denominations, (as well as their zeal againſt the more direct impugners of Chriſt's divinity) is a very ſtrong argument of their judging the doctrine of a coeternal Trinity to be an eſſential of the goſpel. They intended much the ſame thing by animadverting upon thoſe, or theſe; for they ſaw plainly, that the divinity of Chriſt, conſidered as a real perſon, was as much undermined by ſabellianiſm, as it was attacked by the other. Many and various have been the

* Conf. Athanaſ. T. 2. p. 39. Epiphan. lxv. 614.

the ways of evading and eluding theſe two prime verities, viz. That three real perſons are one God, and that God and man is one Chriſt. But watchful and honeſt chriſtians ſtill kept their eyes fixed upon thoſe ſacred truths, and would never admit any doctrine as true, which was contrary to them, or as ſufficient, that was ſhort of them. If any one denied Chriſt's humanity (as the docetæ, or phantaſiaſtæ) that was manifeſtly falſe doctrine, to be rejected at once: but if another admitted his humanity and ſtopped there, that was ſhort and inſufficient. If it was added (as by Cerinthus) that a celeſtial ſubſtance or ſpirit reſted ſometimes upon Jeſus, that was true, but ſtill ſhort of the whole truth in more reſpects than one. If it were ſaid, conſtantly reſiding, that was better, but ſtill very inſufficient. If to that were added, perſonally united, that came nearer up to the full truth, but ſtill was evaſive, and ſhort. Say, "divine ſubſtance perſonally" united with the human: that comes nearer to the point than any of the former; but ſtill there is room for evaſion, becauſe it might mean the Father; and then it amounts to ſabellianiſm only, and patripaſſianiſm. Add therefore, that ſuch divine ſubſtance is perſonally diſtinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit, and then it is confeſſing three real and divine perſons in one Godhead, which is the whole truth. The ſeveral kinds of hereſies which have affected this ſcripture truth, are but the various wan-

drings of human imagination. Truth is ſimple and uniform, while error is almoſt infinite. But I return to Beryllus.

The error which Beryllus unhappily ſplit upon, was the denying a real diſtinction of divine perſons, as I before obſerved; which in direct conſequence made Chriſt Jeſus a mere man, in whom the Father dwelt. The biſhops of the neighbouring ſees were alarmed at the doctrine, and met in ſynod to condemn the hereſy, and the teacher of it. But the great Origen being called in to debate and clear the point in queſtion, Beryllus was made ſenſible of his error, and being a perſon of a pious and an humble mind, he honeſtly retracted it[h]. And it is farther to be obſerved, that he loved his inſtructor Origen ever after, and was ſincerely thankful to him[i] for affording him ſo much new light (new to him) in a queſtion of the greateſt importance. A rare example of godly ſincerity, and true chriſtian humility. His miſtake had ſhewn ſome weakneſs of judgment; but his recovery manifeſted great ſtrength of mind, and a good command over himſelf and his own paſſions.

A. D. 265. *Paul of Samoſata.*

Paul of Samoſata, Biſhop of Antioch, was of a temper and character very different from what

[h] Euſeb. E. H. Lib. vi. C. 33.
[i] Hieronym. Eccl. Script. lxx. p. 138. Edit. Fabric.

what we have mentioned in the laſt article. He gave the churches freſh occaſion for exerting their pious zeal in behalf of our Lord's divinity. He was impeached for hereſy in a council of Antioch, A. D. 265. and diſtinguiſhed himſelf off at that time, and eſcaped without cenſure; but in another council, A. D. 270. he was again accuſed, and convicted, and thereupon depoſed. He is charged by the council which condemned him, with receiving the hereſy of Artemon, with denying his Lord and God, with diſowning any Son of God from heaven, preaching up a deteſtable hereſy, a damnable doctrine, and the like[k]. The ſum of his hereſy, upon comparing the beſt accounts, appears to be this: That there is but one real perſon in the Godhead, viz. the Father[l]; that the Logos is a mere attribute, quality, power, or operation, nothing real and ſubſtantial[m]; and that Chriſt, as it follows of conſequence, is a mere man[n]. His ſcheme appears to have been, in ſubſtance, little different from the ſabellian[o]: but the ſtreſs of the charge againſt him reſted upon this, that he had denied his Lord's divinity; and therefore his hereſy was

[k] Euſeb. E. H. L. vii. C. 30.

[l] Vid. Athanaſ. contr. Apollinar. p. 942. Epiphan. Hær. lxv. 1, 3.

[m] Epiphan. Hær. lxv. 1. Philaſtr. lxiv. p. 126.

[n] Euſeb. E. H. L. vii. C. 27. Theodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. p. 223. Auguſtin. Hær. 44. Damaſcen. Hæreſ. lxv.

[o] See my firſt Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 352. Second Def. p. 460. alias p. 465. Dr. Berriman's Hiſtorical Account, p. 144, &c.

was called, like Theodotus's and Artemon's before, the god denying wickedneſs[p].

A. D. 317. *Arius.*

I cannot well conclude the view of antiquity, with reſpect to the hereſies againſt Chriſt's divinity, without throwing in a word or two about the famous Arius, and his condemnation for proclaiming God the Son a creature, therein denying his Lord's real and proper divinity, as much as any before him. Alexander, then biſhop of Alexandria, in his epiſtle to the other Alexander of Byzantium, or Conſtantinople, (about A. D. 321.) charges the arians with denying their Saviour's divinity[q], and with reviving the hereſy of Ebion, Artemon, and Paul of Samoſata[r]. Not that the arian ſcheme was exactly the ſame with any of thoſe three (for there are degrees of variation from truth, and many wrong ways to one right) but it fell in with them all in the main thing, and in which the principal malignity of their hereſies conſiſted, namely, in the rejecting the true Godhead of Chriſt. I ſhall ſay nothing of the ſynodical cenſures paſſed upon Arius and his adherents, at the firſt opening of the hereſy. In the year 325, he was condemned, in more ſolemn form, by the famous council of Nice, by 318 biſhops called from all parts of the chriſtian world, ſeventeen

[p] Ἀρεισίθεος κακία, Euſeb. L. vii. C. 29.
[q] Theodorit. Eccl. Hiſt. C. iv. p. 9. Edit. Valeſ.
[r] Theodorit. ibid. p. 14.

ſeventeen only of the number ſcrupling it for a time, and at laſt, two only or three diſſenting. They condemned his ſentiments, as amounting to impiety, madneſs, blaſphemy, ſuch as they almoſt trembled to hear[s]; which appears by the council's letter after his condemnation. Their ſentence in that cauſe carried the greater weight in it, as the council was general, called together out of Europe, Aſia, and Africa, from all parts of the empire[t]; as it was upon the matter free, and under no ſecular awe or influences; and laſtly, as it was made up of the wiſeſt, worthieſt, and every way excellent prelates[u] which the chriſtian world could then furniſh. The determination of ſo venerable a council gave a conſiderable check to arianiſm, and always carried great force with it; though it did not ſo quaſh the controverſy as finally to put an end to it, any more than the council of the apoſtles at Jeruſalem[x] (A. D. 49.) put an end to the diſpute about the neceſſity of impoſing circumciſion[y]. But as that firſt council had its uſe in the church, and very great uſe, notwithſtanding the repeated oppoſitions made to it, ſo had this other alſo, and has to this day. Divine wiſdom has appointed no certain

[s] Ἅπαντα ἀναθεμάτισεν ἡ ἁγία σύνοδος, εἴ γε ὅσον ἀκοῦσαι τῆς ἀσεβοῦς δόξης, ἢ ἀπιστίας, καὶ τῶν βλασφήμων ῥημάτων ἀνασχομένη. Apud Socr. L. i. C. 9.

[t] Euſeb. de Vit. Conſtantin. L. iii. C. 7.

[u] Euſeb. de Vit. Conſtantin. L. iii. C. 9.

[x] Acts xv.

[y] See Buddeus, Eccl. Apoſt. p. 114, 294, &c.

tain effective remedies for the perverſeneſs of man, but has provided ſufficient means for the inſtruction and direction of the humble, and modeſt, and well deſigning.

Some perſons have ſuggeſted, that the council of Ariminum (held in 359) conſiſting of 400 biſhops or more[z], may properly be mentioned on the other ſide, as a counterbalance to the council of Nice. But there is no compariſon betwixt them, when the circumſtances are duly conſidered. For, 1. The council of Rimini, or Ariminum, was not general, being of the Weſt only. 2. It was not free, being greatly menaced, diſtreſſed, and overawed by the emperor Conſtantius[a]. 3. Out of the number of 400, there were but 80 arians[b], at the moſt: the other 320, or more, were really orthodox men, induced by artifices to ſubſcribe a creed which they underſtood in a good ſenſe[c], but which, being worded in general terms, was capable of being perverted to a bad one. The deep diſſimulation at that time uſed by the arian managers, procured them the advantage only of a ſhort lived triumph. For no ſooner did the orthodox ſide perceive how they had been impoſed

[z] Athanaſ. de Synod. 720, 749. Sulpic. Sever. p. 267. Socr. E. H. L. iv. C. 17.

[a] Athanaſ. ad Afros, 892, 893. Socrat. E. H. L. 2. C. 37 Sozom. L. iv. C. 19. Hilar. Pictav. 1242. Ed. Bened.

[b] Ariani non amplius quam octoginta: reliqui noſtrarum partium erant. Sulpic. Sever. L. ii. C. 56.

[c] Sonabant verba pietatem, et inter tanta mella præconii, nemo venenum inſertum putabat. Hieron. contr. Lucifer.

impoſed upon, and what uſe was to be made of it, but they declared to the world their own good meaning, and the perfidiouſneſs of the oppoſite party. But of this I have treated more largely elſewhere[d]. It is of that time that St. Jerome ſpeaks, when he pleaſantly ſays, that the whole chriſtian world groaned (viz. under the ſlander thrown upon them by their adverſaries) and wondered that ſhe was arian[e]: that is to ſay, they wondered at the aſſurance of the arians, in ſo impoſing upon the catholics, and in repreſenting them to be the very reverſe of what they really were[f]. The learned Mr. Bingham underſtood theſe matters well, and has expreſſed them juſtly and fully in theſe few lines[g]. "The "arians put an equivocal and poiſonous ſenſe "upon them (the words of the council) giv- "ing out, after the council was ended, that "they had not only aboliſhed the word "conſubſtantial," but with it condemned the "nicene faith alſo: which was ſtrange ſur- "priſing news to the biſhops that had been "at Ariminum. Then ſays St. Jerome, Inge- "muit totus orbis, et arianum ſe eſſe miratus eſt:

[d] Defence Q. xxix. p. 468, 469. Anſwer to Whitby, p. 19. Compare Berriman's Hiſtor. Account, p. 228, &c.

[e] Ingemuit totus orbis, et arianum ſe eſſe miratus eſt. Hier. contr. Lucifer. p. 300.

[f] Concurrebant epiſcopi, qui ariminenſibus dolis irretiti, ſine conſcientia hæretici ferebantur, conteſtantes Corpus Domini, et quicquid in eccleſia ſanctum eſt, ſe nihil mali in ſua fide ſuſpicatos. Hieron. ibid. 301.

[g] Bingham's Antiquities, B. vi. C. 3. ſ. 10. Compare Dr. Berriman, Hiſt. Acc p 228, &c.

" eſt: " The whole world groaned, and was " amazed to think ſhe ſhould be reputed arian." " That is, the catholic biſhops of the whole " world (for there were 300[h] of them preſent " at the council) were amazed to find them- " ſelves ſo abuſed, and repreſented as arian, when " they never intended in the leaſt to confirm " the arian doctrine." But as to the extent of the nicene faith, both at that time, and after, I have ſpoken more particularly of it elſewhere[i], and need not here repeat. Only, the reader may permit me to ſum up the whole in the ſame words, or nearly as before. " There " never was a council on the arian ſide ſo " free, ſo large, ſo in every reſpect unexcep- " tionable as the council of Nice was. But " whatever oppoſition was made to it, was " carried on with ſuch wiles and ſubtleties and " refined artifices, (to ſay nothing of cruel- " ties) as every honeſt man would be aſhamed " of: and notwithſtanding all that the arians " could do, they were not able long to main- " tain

[h] He might have ſaid, 320. But I believe, Jerome meant more than that 320 by the *totus orbis*. He meant all the orthodox; for all of them ſuffered in the ſlander raiſed againſt their brethren, moſt of them as orthodox as themſelves: ſo it affected them all, and all were amazed at the injurious aſperſion. This place therefore of Jerome, rightly underſtood, is ſo far from ſaying, that the whole world was then arian, that it is ſaying the contrary; namely, that the whole world was antiarian. For by *totus orbis* he manifeſtly there means the orthodox, who had been ſlandered as arian, and were really antiarian. They were the *whole world* in his account, the arians being but few in compariſon.

[i] Defence, Q. xxix. p. 468—472. Second Defence, p. 464, ſecond edit. Conf. Baſil. T. 3. p. 307. Bened.

" tain their ground; but the men who ſuſ-
" tained the ſhock, and kept up the credit of
" the nicene faith, were not only the moſt nu-
" merous, but appear to have been as wiſe,
" and as judicious, and as pious men as ever
" the church was adorned with ſince the times
" of the apoſtles[k]."

From what has been ſaid under the preſent article, it is manifeſt, that the impugners of our Lord's divinity have been all along condemned as guilty of hereſy for the firſt three centuries and more; ſo that as far as the conſtant judgment and practice of the church in their decrees and cenſures, during that time, can be conceived to bear weight, the doctrine of our Lord's true and proper divinity, and of conſequence, the doctrine of a real and coeternal Trinity, muſt be looked upon as a fundamental of the chriſtian faith.

III. Beſides what has been pleaded upon the firſt topic relating to creeds, and upon the ſecond relating to heretics; there is yet a third head to go upon, namely, the ſentiments of antenicene fathers, ſuch as they have occaſionally delivered in their writings, diſtinct from what they have reported either of creeds or hereſies. And theſe are what I am next going to produce, according to order of time, to ſhew what they thought of the neceſſity or importance of faith in the ever bleſſed

[k] See this council defended more at large by Dr. Berriman in his Remarks on Mr. Chandler, p. 19—42. And in his Review of the Remarks, p. 28——41.

bleſſed Trinity. Perhaps, I may have anticipated ſome things under the laſt head, which might properly have come in here; or I may chance to take ſome things in here, which might properly have come in there. But it is of no great moment which head they are brought under, ſo long as both center in the ſame concluſion, and the two parts may be conſidered as ſupplemental to each other.

107. *Ignatius.*

I begin with Ignatius, who writes thus: "Be "not led aſide by ſtrange doctrines, nor by an- "tiquated tales, which are unprofitable. For "if we yet live according to judaiſm, it is "much as declaring that we have not accepted "grace[l]; for the moſt holy prophets lived ac- "cording to Chriſt Jeſus. And for that cauſe "were they perſecuted, being inſpired by his "grace, that the unbelievers might be con- "vinced that there is one God who hath ma- "nifeſted himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt his Son, who "is his eternal word, not proceeding from ſi- "lence[m], who in all things pleaſed him that "ſent him." The judaizing heretics, (whether cerinthians, or ebionites, or gnoſtics at large) are the perſons here pointed at, without diſpute[n]: and

[l] Εἰ γὰρ μέχρι νῦν κατὰ [νόμον] Ιουδαϊσμὸν ζῶμεν, ὁμολογοῦμεν χάριν μὴ εἰληφέναι. Ignat. ad Magneſ. ſ. viii.

[m] Τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ ὅς ἐστιν αὐτοῦ λόγος ἀΐδιος, οὐκ ἀπὸ σιγῆς προελθών, ibid.

[n] Hæc eſt ſecunda hujus epiſtolæ pars, quæ eos maxime præmunit contra hæreticos, eos præcipue qui judaiſmum introducere cona-

and the judaiſm here principally charged was, their denial of Chriſt's real and eternal divinity. The jews would not own a proper Son of God[o], an eternal ſubſiſting Logos, but pertinaciouſly diſputed that point with the chriſtians; as may appear ſufficiently, beſides other evidences, from Juſtin's celebrated dialogue with Trypho. So here we may obſerve, how emphatically Ignatius expreſſes the chriſtian faith in oppoſition to thoſe judaizers, by aſſerting Chriſt to be God's Son, and his eternal Word, not proceeding from ſilence, as thoſe judaizers taught. I forbear to enter into the diſpute about σιγὴ, which has been already exhauſted by Biſhop Pearſon, Biſhop Bull, and other learned men. What I am moſt concerned to obſerve is, that judaiſm was the common and juſt reproach thrown upon all the impugners, or underminers of Chriſt's divinity. For that was part of the diſtinguiſhing character of the chriſtian faith, as oppoſed to the jewiſh, in thoſe days[p]. As to Cerinthus and

conabantur; contra quos clare et expreſſe diſputat. Erant autem ii ea tempeſtate, qui divinam Chriſti naturam negabant, ut Ebionitæ, Cerinthiani, Nazaræi, et Helxaitæ. Pearſon Not. in loc. p. 43. Conf. Vindic. p. 55.

[o] Ἰουδαῖος δὲ οὐκ ἂν ὁμολογῆσαι, ὅτι προφήτης τις εἶπεν ἥξειν θεοῦ υἱόν. Origen. contr. Celſ. L. i. p. 38.

Οὐ φαίνῃ τι Ἰουδαῖοι λέγουσι θεὸν ὄντα τὸν χριστὸν καταβήσεσθαι ἢ θεοῦ υἱόν. Ibid. L. iv. p. 162.

Ἐγὼ δὲ καὶ πολλοῖς Ἰουδαίοις καὶ σοφοῖς γε ἐπαγγελλομένοις εἶναι συμβαλὼν, οὐδενὸς ἀκήκοα ἐπαινοῦντος τὸν λόγον εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ Κέλσος εἴρηκε. Ibid. C. 2. p. 79.

[p] I ſay, in thoſe days. For, that the ancienter jews were generally in like ſentiments, is not probable, but the contrary. Of which ſee " Allix's Judgment of the Jewiſh Church." And

" Conſiderations

and Ebion, the early impugners of Chriſt's divinity, it is well known that they were judaizers, and brought their hereſy along with them, tranſplanting it from the ſynagogue to the church. Thoſe that followed them in their hereſy, were judged ſo far to defert the chriſtian cauſe, and to ſide with the jews. Tertullian, though directly pointing to Praxeas, yet makes the charge general againſt all that deny a real and divine Trinity[q]. Novatian paſſes the like cenſure upon as many as denied Chriſt's divinity[r]. Theodotus, though a gentile chriſtian, is charged with jewiſh blindneſs upon the ſame ſcore[s]. Paul of Samoſata is obſerved to have given up Chriſt's divinity in complaiſance to jews[t]. And the arians afterwards, on the ſame account, are frequently cenſured by orthodox chriſtians, as revivers of judaiſm[u]

I now return to Ignatius, who after chargeing thoſe impugners of Chriſt's divinity with judaiſm,

" Conſiderations on Mr. Whiſton's hiſtorical Preface," p. 75, &c. And " Primitive Chriſtianity vindicated," p. 17, &c. And Stillingfleet on the Trinity, C. 9. p. 203, &c.

[q] Judaicæ fidei eſt res, ſic unum Deum credere, ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, et poſt Filium Spiritum—Pater et Filius et Spiritus unum Deum ſiſtunt. Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 31.

[r] Ignari et imperiti Judæi hæredes ſibi hæreticos iſtos reddiderunt. Novat. C. 15. ed. Welchm. alias C. 23.

[s] Cæcitatis Judaicæ conſors. Philaſtr. Hær. 50. Conf. Epiph. Hær. 54. 5.

[t] Theodoret. Hæret. Fab. L. ii. C. 8. Athanaſ. Vol. 1. p. 386. Epiphan. Hær. lxv. 2, 7. Philaſtr. Hær. lxiv.

[u] Athanaſ. de Decret. Synod. N. p. 209, 233. Orat. 2. 484. Baſil. Homil. xxiv. Tom. ii. p. 189. Ed. Bened. Greg. Nyſſen. contr. Eunom. Orat. i. p. 15.

judaiſm, intimates their thereby forfeiting the grace of the goſpel. Then he proceeds to lay down the true chriſtian doctrine of a Son of God, an eternal Word, not produced in time, or from ſilence[a]. And ſince he aſſerts that the denial of that doctrine is judaizing, and is renouncing the grace of the goſpel, it amounts to declaring that the article of Chriſt's divinity is an eſſential of chriſtianity.

A. D. 155. *Juſtin Martyr.*

Juſtin Martyr, in a fragment produced by Dr. Grabe, lays a very particular ſtreſs upon the article of Chriſt's divinity, as the reconciliation of God and man is nearly concerned in it. The paſſage runs thus: "When man's nature had "contracted corruption, it was neceſſary that he "who would ſave it, ſhould do away the prin- "ciple of corruption. But this could not be "done without uniting life by nature [or eſſential "life] with the nature ſo corrupted, to do away "the corruption, and to immortalize the corrupt "nature ever after. Wherefore it was meet that "the word ſhould become incarnate to deliver us "from the death of natural corruption[b]."

Here

[a] Simpliciſſima et optima ſententia videtur, quod Ignatius, contra omnes veteres hæreticos Filii æternitatem negantes, aſſeruerit Chriſtum non eſſe inſtar humani verbi quod poſt ſilentium prodit, ſed Verbum Patri coæternum. Ittigius Hiſtor. Eccl. Sæc. 2^di^, p. 118.

[b] Φύσει δὲ τῆς φθορᾶς προσγινομένης, ἀναγκαῖον ἦν ὅτι σῶσαι βουλόμενος ἦ τὴν φθοροποιὸν οὐσίαν ἀφανίσας· τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἦν ἑτέρως

Here Juſtin aſſerts, that it was neceſſary for eſſential life, (or life by nature) to be united with human nature, in order to ſave it: which is the ſame as to ſay, that it was neceſſary for God to become incarnate, in order to ſave loſt man. So important did he take that article to be, conceiving that the redemption of mankind depended upon it. The phraſe of life by nature undoubtedly imports neceſſary exiſtence, and proper divinity, as I have obſerved and proved upon another occaſion[c], and need not here do again. Biſhop Bull brings ſome other paſſages from Juſtin of like import with this. But for brevity ſake, I chuſe to paſs them over, and am content only to refer[d].

A. D. 176. *Irenæus.*

Irenæus has ſaid much the ſame thing with Juſtin, in fuller and ſtronger words. After obſerving that the Son of God and Word of the Father became man, that he might give ſalvation to his own creature, or workmanſhip[e], he proceeds as follows: "Therefore, as I ſaid "before,

γενέσθαι εἰ μήπερ ἡ κατὰ φύσιν ζωὴ προσεπλάκη τῷ τὴν φθορὰν δεξαμένῳ, ἀφανίζουσα μὲν τὴν φθορὰν, ἀθανατὸν δὲ τῷ λοιπῷ τὸ δεξάμενον διατηροῦσα· διὰ τοῦτο τὸν Λόγον ἐδήεσεν ἐν σώματι γενέσθαι, ἵνα τῷ θανάτῳ τῆς κατὰ φύσιν ἡμᾶς φθορᾶς ἐλευθερώσῃ. Grab. Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 17. Et in notis ad Bull. Judic. C. 7. ſ. 5. p. 344.

[c] Second Defence, p. 265, alias 270. Compare third Defence, p. 110.

[d] Bull Judic. C. 7. ſ. 5. p. 344, 345.

[e] Bonus vere Filius Dei et patiens, Verbum Dei Patris, Filius hominis factus.—Salutem donavit plaſmati ſuo, deſtruens peccatum: eſt enim piiſſimus et miſericors Dominus, et amans humanum genus. Iren. L. iii. C. 18. alias 20.

" before, he united man to God. For if it " were not man that ſhould overcome the ad- " verſary of man, the enemy would not have " been rightly vanquiſhed; and again, if it " were not God to give the ſalvation, we could " not be firmly poſſeſſed of it. Beſides, if man " had not been united to God, he could never " have been partaker of incorruption. So it was " meet that a mediator between God and man, " ſhould bring both together into amity and " concord by his own proximity to both; that " ſo he might preſent man to God, and no- " tify God to men[f]." What we have here to obſerve is, that if Irenæus believed it neceſſary for God to become man, in order to work man's ſalvation, he muſt of conſequence judge the article of Chriſt's divinity (in his high ſenſe of divinity) an eſſential of chriſtian faith, neceſſary to be believed by all to whom it ſhould be revealed, under pain of forfeiting the benefit of it. Iræneus's conſtant way of reaſoning in other places, ſhews that he always carried that concluſion in his mind. And indeed he goes but one page farther on, before he formally draws it, in theſe ſtrong and emphatical

[f] Ἥνωσεν ἂν, καθὼς προέφαμεν, τὸν ἄνθρωπον τῷ θεῷ· εἰ γὰρ μὴ ἄνθρωπος ἐνίκησεν τὸν ἀντίπαλον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, οὐκ ἂν δικαίως ἐνικήθη ὁ ἐχθρός· πάλιν τε, εἰ μὴ ὁ θεὸς ἐδωρήσατο τὴν σωτηρίαν, οὐκ ἂν βεβαίως ἔσχομεν αὐτήν· καὶ εἰ μὴ συνηνώθη ὁ ἄνθρωπος τῷ θεῷ, οὐκ ἂν ἠδυνήθη μετασχεῖν ἀφθαρσίας· ἔδει γὰρ τὸν μεσίτην θεοῦ τε καὶ ἀνθρώπων, διὰ τῆς ἰδίας πρὸς ἑκατέρους οἰκειότητος, εἰς φιλίαν καὶ ὁμόνοιαν τοὺς ἀμφοτέρους συναγαγεῖν, καὶ θεῷ μὲν παραστῆσαι τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀνθρώποις δὲ γνωρίσαι τὸν θεόν. Irenæus, ibid.

tical words[g]: "They who make [Jeſus] a mere "man begotten of Joſeph, remaining under "the bondage of the firſt diſobedience, are in "a dead ſtate, inaſmuch as they are not yet "conjoined with the word of God the Father, "nor have received freedom by the Son: ac- "cording to what himſelf ſays; *If the Son "ſhall make you free, you ſhall be free indeed*[h]. "While they acknowledge not him who of "the virgin is Emmanuel [God with us] they "forfeit the benefit of it, which is life eter- "nal. While they admit not the word of in- "corruption, they continue in mortal fleſh, "and are bound over to death, for want of "receiving the antidote of life." This excellent writer has a great deal more to the ſame purpoſe in the ſame chapter. But what I have cited, may ſuffice for a ſummary view of his ſentiments on this head. It is obſervable, that according to him, the not receiving the Emmanuel as Emmanuel, that is, as "God incarnate," is in effect throwing up the privileges of it, (viz. life eternal) and is remaining under the dominion of death and hell. Nothing can be ſtronger

[g] Qui nude tantum hominem eum dicunt ex Joſeph generatum, perſeverantes in ſervitute priſtinæ inobedientiæ, moriuntur; nondum commixti Verbo Dei Patris, neque per Filium recipientes libertatem, quemadmodum ipſe ait: *ſi Filius vos manumiſerit, vere liberi eritis.* Ignorantes autem eum qui ex virgine eſt Emmanuel, privantur *munere ejus*, quod eſt *vita æterna.* Non recipientes autem Verbum incorruptionis, perſeverant in carne mortali; et ſunt debitores mortis, antidotum vitæ non accipientes. Iren. Lib. iii. C. 19. alias C. 21.

[h] John viii. 36.

ſtronger for the importance of the article of Chriſt's divinity; eſpecially if this paſſage be compared with the author's high and juſt ſenſe of the name Emmanuel, importing that Chriſt is ſubſtantially, or eſſentially, God in one nature, as he is man in another[i]. I know not whether I again need to take notice (having twice before done it[k]) how Irenæus here mixes the two queſtions about the birth of a virgin, and about the Lord's divinity, as amounting to one, upon the foot of the then preſent controverſies. For the point then in queſtion was, whether Chriſt was conceived in the common way of human generation, or whether the divine Logos coming upon the virgin, ſuperſeded and excluded human means? The queſtion being ſo ſtated, the aſſerting a divine Logos in Chriſt, was of courſe aſſerting the birth of a virgin; as the denying the birth of a virgin was of courſe denying any perſonal union of the Logos with man. Thus the two quſtions, at that time, reſolved in a manner into one: which is the reaſon, as I hinted before, of their being intermingled together.

A. D.

[i] Diligentur igitur ſignificavit Spiritus Sanctus per ea quæ dicta ſunt, generationem ejus quæ eſt ex virgine, et ſubſtantiam quoniam Deus (Emmanuel enim nomen hoc ſignificat) et manifeſtat quoniam homo, in eo quod dicit, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. 21. alias 26.

Οἱ τὸν ἐκ τῆς παρθένου Εμμανουὴλ κηρύττοντες, τὴν ἕνωσιν τοῦ λόγου τοῦ θεοῦ πρὸς τὸ πλάσμα αὐτοῦ ἐδήλουν· quoniam Verbum caro erit, et Filius Dei Filius hominis—et hoc factus quod et nos, *Deus fortis eſt*, et inenarrabile habet genus. Iren. L. iv. C. 33. alias 66.

[k] See above, p. 304, 308.

A. D. 177. *Athenagoras.*

Athenagoras in his apology for the chriſtian religion, written at this time[l], has more paſſages than one[m], which plainly prove his belief of the truth of the doctrine of the Trinity. But as to the neceſſity, or the importance of ſuch faith, he had the leſs occaſion to ſpeak particularly, or to preſs it with any earneſtneſs, ſince his immediate concern was not with heretics, or with jews, but with pagans only. Nevertheleſs, he occaſionally drops ſome expreſſions, which intimate his high veneration for that ſublime and tremendous doctrine, and ſhew how much it concerned chriſtians, to make it the ſubject of their moſt ſerious thoughts, and moſt devout meditations. Speaking of chriſtians, he deſcribes them[n] "as men that made ſmall account of "the preſent life, but were intent only upon "contemplating God[o], and knowing his word "who

[l] See Moſheim, Obſervat. Sacr. C. 4.

[m] Vid. Bull. Defenſ. F. N. ſ. ii. C. 4. p. 67, alias 71. Dr. Biſhop's Sermons, p. 186, &c. Nourri. Apparat. ad Bibl. Max. Vol. 1. p. 487, &c. My Sermons, p. 301. Second Defence, 72—78, 266, &c.

[n] Ἄνθρωποι δὲ, τὸν μὲν ἐνταῦθα ὀλίγου καὶ μικρῷ τινος ἄξιον βίον λελογισμένοι, ὑπὸ μόνου δὲ παραπεμπόμενοι τούτου, ὃν ἴσως [forte νοήσασθαι] θεὸν καὶ τὸν παρ᾽ αὐτῷ λόγον εἰδέναι, τίς ἡ τοῦ παιδὸς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα ἑνότης, τίς ἡ τοῦ πατρὸς πρὸς τὸν υἱὸν κοινωνία, τί τὸ πνεῦμα, τίς ἡ τῶν τοσούτων ἕνωσις καὶ διαίρεσις ἑνουμένων, τοῦ πνεύματος, τοῦ παιδὸς, τοῦ πατρός. Athenag. Legat. L. xi. p. 46. Edit. Ox.

[o] Νοήσασθαι, for ἐν ἴσως, is an emendation of a learned foreigner, Godfr. Olearius in his Diſſertat. Theolog. de Spiritus S. cum Patre et Filio adoratione, contr. Gul. Whiſton, A. D. 1711, p. 2. The emendation has been taken notice of before by Dr. Biſhop. Sermons, p. 188.

" who is from him; what union the Son has with " the Father, what communion the Father has " with the Son; what the Spirit is, and what " the union and diſtinction are of ſuch ſo united, " the Spirit, the Son, and the Father." From hence we may infer how important a doctrine that of the Trinity, as underſtood by Athenagoras (the ſame as we underſtand at this day) was conceived to be, that the then chriſtians made it one principal concern of their lives, to contemplate and adore the three divine perſons. I ſay, adore: for though that is not expreſſed in this paſſage, it is undoubtedly implied, and is the expreſs doctrine of the author in other places[b]. Thus much we may undoubtedly collect from the preſent paſſage, that myſteries of faith were not then thought barren ſpeculations, or matters of ſlight concernment. The reflection of a learned foreigner hereupon, is very juſt and proper, and I ſhall give it the reader in the margin[c], as an uſeful comment upon this para-

[b] Athenag. C. x. p. 40. xxvi. p. 122.

[c] Quanquam in primis Chriſtianiſmi temporibus id cum primis gloriæ ſibi duxerint fidei noſtræ ſanctiſſimæ profeſſores, quod non meditatione verborum, ſed demonſtratione et inſtitutione operum chriſtianam rem abſolvi profiterentur; non tamen iſta Praxis ſacra ita fuit a Theoriâ doctrinæ chriſtianæ ſeparata, ut non myſteria etiam fidei, a quorum rectâ cognitione divini numinis cultus, tum vitæ de reliquo recte inſtituendæ ratio penderent, non temere quidem, ſed neque tamen perfunctorie ſcrutarentur.—Etenim qui in primis chriſtianiſmi initiis, inque ipſo adeo φωτισμῷ ſuo, accepiſſent Fidem in Patrem, Filium, et Spiritum S. eaque nomina perpetuo in ore haberent, eos ſane oportebat eo contendere, ut creſcerent in omni plenitudine ſcientiæ de myſterio tam auguſto tamque venerando. Godfr. Olear. in Diſſertat. p. 1, 2.

paragraph of Athenagoras. I proceed to other eccleſiaſtical writers in their order.

A. D. 209. *Tertullian.*

Tertullian has ſome very remarkable expreſſions relating to the faith of the church in Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, one God, as being the ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel, the very life and ſpirit of the chriſtian religion. I have cited part of the paſſage before, but ſhall now give it intire. "It is mere judaiſm, to "believe one God in ſuch a ſenſe as not to "reckon the Son to him, and after the Son, "the Spirit. For wherein is the great difference "between them and us, except it be in this "article? What is it that the goſpel has done, "what is the ſubſtance of the New Teſtament, "extending the law and the prophets as far as "John, if from thence forwards, Father, Son, "and Holy Ghoſt, three perſons, are not be-"lieved to make one God[d]?" I have taken a little liberty in tranſlating, juſt enough to keep the Engliſh up, and not to alter the ſenſe. Three perſons is barely a literal rendering of tres, in that place, which cannot be otherwiſe ſo well expreſſed

[d] Cæterum Judaicæ fidei eſt res, ſic unum Deum credere, ut Filium adnumerare ei nolis, et poſt Filium, Spiritum. Quid enim inter nos et illos, niſi differentia iſta? Quod opus evangelii? Quæ eſt ſubſtantia novi Teſtamenti ſtatuens legem et prophetas uſque ad Johannem, ſi non exinde Pater, et Filius, et Spiritus, tres crediti, unum Deum ſiſtunt? Tertul. adv. Prax. C. 31. p. 102. Edit. Welchm.

expreſſed in Engliſh. Beſides, the word perſona, for the ſame thing, is common in Tertullian[e]. As to what concerns the importance of the doctrine of the Trinity, it is impoſſible to invent any thing fuller or ſtronger, in ſo few words, than this paſſage. I am ſenſible it will be pleaded in bar to his evidence, that he was a montaniſt. The fact is true, but there is no argument at all in it, as has been often ſhewn by learned men; but more particularly by the learned and judicious Mr. Welchman[f], in his late very correct edition of the treatiſe againſt Praxeas. Tertullian was no montaniſt in 198. But it has been ſufficiently proved, both by Mr. Welchman and Moſheim, that his apology (which contains the ſame doctrine) was as early as that year.

A. D. 256. *Cyprian.*

St. Cyprian has a remarkable paſſage, which ſpeaks full and cloſe to our purpoſe. Arguing for the invalidity of heretical baptiſms, he aſks, how any perſons baptized by heretics, and thereby partaking in their hereſy (ſo he muſt mean) can be preſumed to obtain remiſſion of ſins, and to become the temple of God? "If he be thereby made the tem-
"ple of God, I would aſk, of what God [or,
"divine

[e] Tertull. contr Prax. C. xi. p. 32, 34. xii. 35, 37.

[f] Welchman. Præfat. ad Tertul. contr. Prax. p. 5–13. Conf. Moſheim, Diſquiſ. Chronologico crit. de verâ ætate Apologetici a Tertulliano conſcripti.

" divine perſon] it is? Is it of [God] the " creator? He could not be ſo, if he believed " not in him. Is it of Chriſt? Neither can " he be his temple, while he denies Chriſt to " be God. Is it then of the Holy Ghoſt? " But ſince the three are one, how can the " Holy Ghoſt have friendſhip with Him that " is at enmity with either Father or Son[f]?" Here it is obſervable, 1. That St. Cyprian gives the name or title of God, to each of the divine perſons. 2. That to deny Chriſt to be God, is interpretatively excluding one's ſelf from Chriſt, and declaring enmity towards all the three, who are one. 3. That therefore the acknowledging Chriſt to be God, is neceſſary to ſalvation, and the impugning that doctrine is deſtructive of it. Conſequently, one is a fundamental article of faith, and the other a fundamental error. So far is plain. And now if there remains any room for diſpute, it can only be about the true and full meaning of the word God, in this place. But Cyprian's declaring that ſalvation depends upon the article, is a ſtrong preſumption that he underſtood the word in its juſt and proper ſenſe. His applying it indifferently to all the three perſons, without any

[f] Si peccatorum remiſſionem conſecutus eſt et ſanctificatus eſt, et templum Dei factus eſt, quæro, cujus Dei? Si Creatoris, non potuit qui in eum non credidit. Si Chriſti, nec hujus fieri poteſt templum, qui negat Deum Chriſtum. Si Spiritus Sancti, cum tres unum ſint, quomodo Spiritus Sanctus placatus eſſe ei poteſt, qui aut Patris, aut Filii inimicus? Cyprian. Ep. 73. ad Jubaian. p. 203. Edit. Oxon.

any mark of diſtinction, is a further preſumption of the ſame thing. His ſaying, that the *three are one* [*unum*] one ſubſtance, one thing, makes it ſtill plainer. And laſtly, his applying the title of God to the Son, in the ſtricteſt and higheſt ſenſe, in the other parts of his works, ſets it beyond diſpute[h]. I may obſerve by the way, of Cyprian, as I have before hinted of other fathers, that he went upon this maxim, that whoſoever ſhall diſbelieve the doctrines of ſalvation revealed to mankind, ſhall have no part in the ſalvation ſo tendered to them, ordinarily, at leaſt.

A. D. 257. *Novatian.*

Novatian expreſſes the ſame thought in very clear and ſtrong terms. "If God the Father "ſaves none but through God, then no one can "be ſaved by God the Father, who does not con-"feſs that Chriſt is God; in whom, and by whom, "the Father promiſes to give ſalvation. Where-"fore, very juſtly, whoſoever acknowledges him "to be God, is in the way to be ſaved by Chriſt "who is God; and whoſoever doth not acknow-"ledge him to be God, forfeits ſalvation, becauſe "he cannot otherwiſe have it but in Chriſt as God[i]."

Words

[h] The paſſages are collected in Biſhop Bull, D. F. N. ſect. ii. C. 10. p. 119, &c. And in my Defence, Q. ii. p. 29, &c. Second Defence, Q. ii. p. 148. alias p. 153.

[i] Si non ſalvat niſi in Deo Pater Deus, ſalvari non poterit a Deo Patre quiſquam niſi confeſſus fuerit Chriſtum Deum, in quo, et per quem ſe repromittit Pater ſalutem daturum: ut merito, quiſquis

Words too plain to need any comment. Only I may obſerve, that Novatian, as well as Cyprian, underſtood the word God, as applied to Chriſt, to import proper and ſubſtantial divinity; as I have abundantly proved elſewhere[k]. Beſides which, it is certain, that the Novatians, his followers, were always orthodox in the article of Chriſt's divinity, as alſo in the doctrine of the whole Trinity[l].

A. D. 259. *Dionyſius of Rome.*

Dionyſius, biſhop of Rome, in a valuable fragment, preſerved by Athanaſius, ſtiles the doctrine of the Trinity, The moſt venerable doctrine of the church of God[m]; underſtanding the doctrine as we do at this day. It was then looked upon as a ſpeculative opinion, or as a matter of ſlight importance. But this is not all I have to obſerve from the ſame excellent writer. He goes on to ſpeak of ſome who had the preſumption to call the Son of God a creature, led to it by their

quiſquis illum agnoſcit eſſe Deum, ſalutem inveniat in Deo Chriſto; quiſquis non recognoſcit eſſe Deum, ſalutem perdiderit, quoniam alibi niſi in Chriſto Deo eam invenire non poterit. Novat. C. 12. p. 36.

[k] Firſt Defence, p. 13, &c. p. 137, &c. Second Defence, p. 61, &c. 129, &c. 150, 502, 507. 2d Edit. Conf. Bull. D. F. N. ſect. ii. C. 10. p. 121, 122.

[l] The teſtimonies may be ſeen collected in a late pamphlet, intituled, An Anſwer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiſton, &c. By H. E. in the preface, p. 2, 3.

[m] Τὸ σεμνότατον κήρυγμα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τῦ θεῦ. Apud. Athanaſ. Vol. i. p. 231.

their indiſcreet oppoſition to ſabellianiſm, as it was natural enough for weak men to run from one extreme to another. He rejects the notion with the utmoſt abhorrence, as every wiſe and good man would: and after cenſuring Marcion's tritheiſtic doctrine as diabolical, he proceeds to ſpeak of the other, as follows: "Nor are they "leſs to blame, who think the Son a crea- "ture, and who ſuppoſe the Lord to have come "into being, as if he were one of the things "that were really made. The ſacred oracles "aſſign him a generation, ſuitable and proper, "not a formation and creation. Wherefore "it muſt be blaſphemy of no ordinary ſize, "but of the firſt magnitude, to ſay that the "Lord was a kind of handy work. For if he "began to be, he once was not. But he ex- "iſted eternally, if ſo be that he is in the "Father, as himſelf teſtifies, and if Chriſt be "the word, and wiſdom, and power[n]." There is more to the ſame purpoſe in what follows. What I have cited may ſuffice to ſhew, that the doctrine of our Lord's coeternal divinity was then looked upon as an article of the higheſt importance, and that to deny it was to blaſpheme

[n] Οὐ μεῖον δ' ἄν τις καταμέμφοιτο καὶ τὸς ποίημα τὸν υἱὸν εἶναι δοξάζοντας, καὶ γεγονέναι τὸν κύριον, ὥσπερ ἕν τι ὄντως γενομένων, νομίζοντας, τῶν θείων λογίων γέννησιν αὐτῷ τὴν ἁρμόττουσαν καὶ πρέπουσαν, ἀλλ' οὐχὶ πλάσιν τινὰ καὶ ποίησιν προσμαρτυρόντων. Βλάσφημον δ' ἂν ὁ τὸ τυχὸν, μέγιστον μὲν ὄν, χειροποίητον τρόπον τινὰ λέγειν τὸν κύριον· εἰ γὰρ γέγονεν υἱὸς, ἦν ὅτε οὐκ ἦν· ἀεὶ δὲ ἦν, εἴγε ἐν τῷ πατρί ἐστιν, ὡς αὐτός φησι, καὶ εἰ λόγος, καὶ σοφία, καὶ δύναμις χριστός. Apud. Athanaſ. Vol. i. p. 231, 232.

pheme in a moſt grievous manner, according to the ſentiments of the church at that time. For Dionyſius ſpeaks not his own ſenſe only, but the ſenſe of the Roman ſynod, and of good chriſtians in general; as he himſelf intimates by his ſaying to thoſe whom he addreſſes himſelf to, that he had no need to dwell upon that matter before perſons ſo enlightened by the ſpirit of God, and ſo well apprized, as they were, of the great abſurdity of making the Son a creature[o].

A. D. 259. *Dionyſius of Alexandria.*

The caſe of Dionyſius of Alexandria is a famous caſe. He had written ſome things againſt the ſabellians, wherein expreſſing himſelf unwarily, he was ſuſpected by ſome to lean too far towards the oppoſite extreme, as if he had not juſt notions of the divinity of Chriſt. A jealouſy being raiſed, the matter was thought conſiderable enough to be brought before the other Dionyſius biſhop of Rome: which, probably, occaſioned his writing what I have juſt now cited from him[p]. The biſhop of Rome took cognizance of the clauſe, and the biſhop of Alexandria, though not inferior to him, nor under his juriſdiction, ſubmitted ſo far as to put in his

[o] Καὶ τὶ ἂν ἐπὶ πλέον περὶ τούτων πρὸς ὑμᾶς διαλεγοίμην, πρὸς ἄνδρας πνευματοφόρους, καὶ σαφῶς ἐπισταμένους τὰς ἀτοπίας τὰς ἐκ τοῦ ποίημα λέγειν τὸν υἱὸν ἀνακυπτούσας. ibid. p. 232.

[p] See Athanaſ. de Sententia Dionyſii Alex. p. 252. de Synod. 757.

his anſwer, or apology: which alone ſhews, that it was looked upon by all parties, as a cauſe of great moment: for in ſmaller matters, biſhops were not obliged to give account to their collegues. St. Cyprian well expreſſes both the caſes, viz. where and when independent biſhops were accountable to other biſhops[q], and where they were not[r]. The ſum is, that in the ritual part of religion, ſuch biſhops were independent, and unaccountable; but in the ſubſtantial part, in matters of neceſſary faith, they were liable to be cenſured by their brethren. Seeing therefore that Dionyſius of Alexandria was accuſed in a cauſe of hereſy, the biſhop of Rome could not decline hearing it, nor the other refuſe to ſubmit to have it heard, and judged. The whole proceſs of that affair ſhews that the divinity of Chriſt (about which the queſtion was) was looked upon by all

[q] Copioſum corpus eſt ſacerdotum, concordiæ mutuæ glutino atque unitatis vinculo copulatum, ut ſi quis ex collegio noſtro hæreſin facere, et gregem Chriſti lacerare et vaſtare tentaverit, ſubveniant cæteri, et quaſi paſtores utiles et miſericordes, oves dominicas in gregem colligant. Cyprian. ad Steph. Ep. 68. p. 178. Conf. Frid. Spanheim. F. Tom. 1. p. 740.

[r] Supereſt ut de hâc ipsâ re, ſinguli quid ſentiamus, proferamus; neminem judicantes, aut a jure communionis aliquem, ſi diverſum ſenſerit, amoventes. Neque enim quiſquam noſtrum epiſcopum ſe epiſcoporum conſtituit, aut tyrannico terrore ad obſequendi neceſſitatem collegas ſuos adigit; quando habeat omnis epiſcopus pro licentiâ libertatis et poteſtatis ſuæ arbitrium proprium; tamque judicari ab alio non poteſt, quam nec ipſe poteſt judicare. Sed expectemus univerſi judicium Domini noſtri Jeſu Chriſti, qui unus et ſolus habet poteſtatem et præponendi nos in eccleſiæ ſuæ gubernatione, et de actu noſtro judicandi. Concil. Carthagin. apud Cypr. p. 229, 230.

all parties as a cauſe of the utmoſt concernment to religion. The whole chriſtian world, in a manner, was in an alarm about it. Complaint was brought from Egypt as far as to Italy. The biſhop of Rome, with his clergy in ſynod, were in the greateſt concern upon it, and ſent their judgment of the matter in queſtion to the biſhop of Alexandria, requiring him to give an account of his faith. And that aged venerable primate did ſo ſoon after, declaring in the face of the world, that he never intended the leaſt injury to the divinity of Chriſt, or to his conſubſtantiality, but himſelf believed it, as ſincerely, and fully, as any man elſe could. This affair is recorded by Athanaſius[s], from whom I have collected what I have ſaid. And it is a ſtanding monument of the high regard paid to the doctrine of our Lord's divinity[t], as a moſt important and fundamental article of chriſtianity, in thoſe days, 60 years and more before the council of Nice.

A. D. 319. *Alexander of Alexandria.*

I ſhall cloſe this account with the ſentiments of Alexander and his clergy, among which were near a hundred more biſhops of the province,

[s] Athanaſ. de Sententia Dionyſ. p. 252. de Synod. 757, 758.

[t] See the whole thing more particularly drawn out, and vindicated from exceptions, in Bull. Def. F. N. ſect. ii. C. 11. Thirlby's anſwers to Whiſton's ſuſpicions, p. 31, &c. Berriman, Hiſt. Account, p. 127, &c.

province, upon the preſent queſtion, at the firſt breaking out of the arian hereſy. In the ſynodical letter, after ſentence of excommunication paſſed upon Arius and his adherents, they repreſent the arians, or euſebians, as fallen into an apoſtaſy, and as forerunners of antichriſt[a]. They compare them with Hymenæus and Philetus, and the traitor Judas; and they ſtigmatize them as enemies to God, and ſubverters of ſouls. Such was their ſenſe of the high importance of the doctrine of Chriſt's divinity, which Arius had impugned. About two years after, the ſame Alexander, in his circular letter to the other Alexander of Byzantium, after declaring his faith in Chriſt, as truly and eſſentially God, of that and other creeds, he ſays: "Theſe we teach, "and theſe we declare. Theſe are the apoſto-"lical doctrines of the church, for which "we ſhould be content to die, making ſmall "account of them who would compel us to "deny them. For though they ſhould even "torture us to comply, yet would we not caſt "off our hope in thoſe [doctrines]: for the op-"poſing of which Arius and Achillas, with their "accomplices, being enemies to the truth, are "ejected out of the church, as deſerters of our "holy faith [godly doctrine,] purſuant to St. "Paul's rule; If any one *preach any other goſpel* "*unto you* than what you have received, *let him* "*be*

[a] Ἄνδρες παράνομοι καὶ χριτομάχοι, διδάσκοντες ἀποστασίαν ἣν εἰκότως ἄν τις πρόδρομον τὸν Ἀντιχρίστου ὑπονοήσειε καὶ καλέσειεν. Ap. Athanaſ. p. 397. et ap. Socrat. L. i. C. 6.

" *be accurſed*, though he ſhould pretend to be an " *angel from heaven*[b]." Such were the ſentiments of this good and great man, relating to the importance of the doctrine he taught; the ſame which was afterward confirmed by the general council of Nice, ſummoned from out of all Chriſtendom to decide ſo momentous a queſtion.

The ſum of what I have advanced in this chapter, is, that by three ſeveral topics it is proved to be certain fact, that the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, and ſo of the whole Trinity, was looked upon by the ancient churches of Chriſt, as one of the prime verities, one of the eſſentials of chriſtianity. This, I ſay, is proved from creeds, and from cenſures upon hereſies, (public acts of the church) and from particular teſtimonies of fathers, declaring their own private ſentiments of the weight and importance of the doctrines we have been conſidering. Now, I proceed to enquire of what uſe and value this view of the ancients may be to us.

[b] Ταῦτα διδάσχομεν, ταῦτα κηρύττομεν· ταῦτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας τὰ ἀποστολικὰ δόγματα, ὑπὲρ ὧν καὶ ἀποθνήσκωμεν, τῶν ἐξόμνυσθαι αὐτὰ βιαζομένων ἧττον πεφροντικότες, εἰ καὶ διὰ βασάνων ἀναγκάζυσι, τὴν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐλπίδα μὴ ἀποστρεφόμενοι· ὧν ἐναντίοι, κ. τ. λ. Apud Theodorit. E. H. L. i. C. 4.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Shewing the uſe *and* value *of eccleſiaſtical antiquity with reſpect to controverſies of faith.*

I INTEND not here to conſider the uſe of the fathers in the largeſt extent, but only ſo far as concerns articles of faith. I ſhall endeavour to ſet this matter in as clear a light as I can, for the impartial and diſcerning reader to judge of, avoiding all extremes. A certain writer, whom I ſhould not perhaps have taken the leaſt notice of, had it not thus fallen in my way, has been pleaſed to tell the world; that "Dr. "Waterland and ſome others, who have appeared "on the ſame ſide of the queſtion, have only "conſidered the ſcripture in that light which "a ſober Turk or an Indian might diſcover in "it. But ſcripture has a much greater force "in the hands of St. Athanaſius, and of St. "Baſil, (who viewed it in its true, that is, in "its original and traditionary ſenſe, and under "the lights of faith) than it has in Dr. Water-"land's; who aſcends no higher than the bare "letter, and that ſenſe, of which all men, who "are ſincere, may equally judge, whether they "believe it or not. But when St. Athanaſius "and St. Baſil argue from ſcripture, they have "a regard to faith, and thoſe ideas which catho-

" lics have already had concerning the Son and " the Holy Spirit[c]." The report which this gentleman has here made, may be true in part: and ſo far what he intended as an article of blame, may appear much otherwiſe to more equal judges. I doubt not to ſay, that the ſcripture is plain enough in this cauſe, for any honeſt turk or indian to judge of, who is but able to diſcern the difference between wreſting a text, and giving it an eaſy and natural interpretation. Nor do I ſee, why a man may not be as certain of the conſtruction of ſcripture, in this article, from the words themſelves, comparing ſcriptures with ſcriptures, as he may be of the ſenſe of Homer or Ariſtotle, of Cicero or Cæſar, in plain and clear paſſages. Nevertheleſs, if over and above this, any further light or ſtrength may ariſe from comparing ſcripture and antiquity together, it is an additional advantage to our cauſe, ſuch as we are thankful for, and conſtantly make uſe of. All kinds of evidences are uſeful; and there is ſo much weakneſs generally in mankind, that we have no reaſon to throw aſide any aſſiſtances given us for relief or remedy. Antiquity therefore, ſuperadded to ſcripture, is what we ſincerely value, and pay a great regard to; perhaps much greater than that gentleman himſelf really does. For, if I be not very

[c] An anſwer to Dr. Clarke and Mr. Whiſton, concerning the divinity of the Son and Holy Spirit, with a ſummary account of the chief writers of the firſt ages. By H. E. printed by Roberts, 1729. See Pref. p. 4, 5.

very much miſtaken in the drift and tendency of his cenſure, it is ſuch as plainly diſcovers (notwithſtanding his artful diſguiſes) a much more affectionate concern for a modern corrupt church, than for the pure and ancient faith. St. Athanaſius and St. Baſil pleaded the ſame cauſe, and exactly in the ſame way, as we of the church of England do. They appealed to ſcripture firſt, ſpeaking for itſelf, and proving its own ſenſe to the common reaſons of mankind according to the juſt rules of grammar and criticiſm. After that, they referred alſo to the well known faith of all the ancient churches, as ſuperabundantly confirming the ſame rational and natural conſtruction. Athanaſius and Baſil were wiſe and honeſt men, and would never have admitted what this writer meanly inſinuates[d] (while he pretends to be an advocate on the ſame ſide) that arianiſm would not be hereſy upon the foot of ſcripture, ſingly conſidered. Such unworthy ſuggeſtions are as contrary to the general ſenſe of antiquity, as they are to truth and godlineſs; and tend only to betray the beſt of cauſes, for the ſake of ſerving and ſupporting one of the worſt. Athanaſius's ſentiments may appear from one ſingle paſſage, which is all I need refer to at length in proof of a thing ſo well known. He obſerves, that the arians, finding nothing in ſcripture to countenance their hereſy, were forced to have recourſe

[d] Ibid. p. 6, 7.

courſe to confident preſumptions and colluſive ſophiſtry; and when they had done with thoſe, their next attempt was to abuſe the fathers alſo[e], who favoured them as little as the ſcripture did. Athanaſius appealed to ſcripture in the firſt place, and laid the main ſtreſs there: which indeed is his conſtant way in his diſpute with the arians. No man ſpeaks more highly of the perfection and ſufficiency of ſcripture than he does: namely, that it affords the fulleſt and ſtrongeſt evidences, for eſtabliſhing the faith againſt the arians[f]; and that is in itſelf ſufficient for every thing[g]. The like might be ſhewn of Baſil, were it needful. Therefore let not that gentleman hope to find ſhelter for his inſidious conduct, under thoſe great and venerable names.

He proceeds to obſerve, that "Catholics (Roman catholics I ſuppoſe he means) are ſo "accuſtomed to join faith and reading the holy "ſcripture together, that they account this to "be the natural ſignification of the words[h]." Which is artfully inſinuating, that the ſenſe which trinitarians affix to ſcripture, is not natural, but made to appear ſo, through the prejudice

[e] Τῶν δ' Ἀρειομανιτῶν τὴν ἀλογίαν καὶ νῦν ἐπέγνων· εἶδεν γὰρ ὅτ' ἔυλογον, ὅτε πρὸς ἀπόδειξιν ἐκ τῆς θείας γραφῆς ἐντὸν ἔχουσης τῆς αἱρέσεως αὐτῶν, ἀεὶ μὲν προφάσεις ἀναισχύντους ἐπορίζοντο, καὶ σοφίσματα πιθανὰ· νῦν δὲ καὶ διαβάλλειν τοὺς πατέρας τετολμήκασιν. Athanaſ. de Sent. Dionyſ. p. 243.

[f] Vid. Athanaſ. 274, 720, 237. Edit. Bened.

[g] Athanaſ. p. 1.

[h] Anſwer to Dr. Clarke, &c. p. 7.

judice of education, or through the lights of an infallible chair. And ſo he pleads, under cover, for impoſing a ſenſe upon ſcripture, inſtead of taking one from the natural force of the words. This never was the advice of the ancients[k], neither ought it to be the practice of moderns. We inſiſt upon it, that our interpretation of ſcripture is juſt and natural, and that one great uſe of antiquity is, to guard that natural conſtruction againſt unnatural diſtortions. To do violence to ſcripture, in order to bring it to ſpeak what we have a mind to, or what we have pre-conceived, is making ſcripture inſignificant, and ſetting up a new rule of faith. And indeed, this gentleman, afterwards, gives very broad intimations, that ſcripture is not the whole rule of faith[l]. So, now the ſecret is out. And, I ſuppoſe, by this time, it is manifeſt what cauſe he is ſerving; and that he has ſomething elſe more at heart than the doctrine of the Trinity. However, to do him juſtice, though he has made too many conceſſions, and has not ſufficiently conſidered his ſubject[m], he has yet given us a neat methodical ſummary of the doctrine of the ancients upon

[k] Optimus enim lector eſt, qui dictorum intelligentiam expectet ex dictis potius quam imponat, et retulerit magis quam attulerit; neque cogat id videri dictis contineri, quod ante lectionem præſumſerit intelligendum. Hilar. de Trin. L. i. Col. 777.

[l] Anſwer to Dr. Clarke, Pref. p. 17. Book 22, 23.

[m] This appears from his lame and confuſed account of the word perſon, p. 5.—11, 38.

upon that head. Only, it would grieve a man to obſerve, how diſadvantageous circumſtances he chuſes to place thoſe venerable ſaints in, as overruling the natural ſenſe of words, and making that hereſy which ſcripture has not made ſo, having no authority for doing it, but what they muſt borrow from a particular church[n], which gives the ſame to every article of the Trent creed. But leaving this gentleman to take his own way, let us now proceed to the buſineſs in hand.

There is no occaſion for magnifying antiquity at the expence of ſcripture; neither is that the way to do real honour to either, but to expoſe both; as it is ſacrificing their reputation to ſerve the ends of novelty and error. Antiquity ought to attend as an handmaid to ſcripture,

[n] The very pious Mr. Nelſon, in a letter to a popiſh prieſt, has ſome reflections worth the inſerting in this place.

"I am not ignorant, that two of your great champions, "Cardinal Perron and Petavius, to raiſe the authority of gene- "ral councils, and to make the rule of their faith appear more "plauſible, have aſperſed not only the holy ſcriptures, as unca- "pable, by reaſon of their obſcurity, to prove the great and "neceſſary point of our Saviour's divinity, but have impeached "alſo the fathers of the firſt three centuries as tardy in the "ſame point.—Bleſſed God! that men ſhould be ſo fond of "human inventions, as to ſacrifice to them thoſe pillars of our "faith, which are alone proper and able to ſupport it; I mean "ſcripture, and primitive antiquity. But to do juſtice to the "memory of ſo learned a man as Petavius, the biſhop of Meaux "told me, diſcourſing with him once on this ſubject, that "in the laſt edition he made of his works, he retracted this "opinion: which I am willing to believe upon the authority "of that great man, &c." Dr. Hickes's Letters, &c. p. 334. Compare Chillingworth, Pref. ſect. 16, 17, 18. Wall. Inf. Bapt. Part. ii. C. 8. ſ. 6.

ſcripture, to wait upon her as her miſtreſs, and to obſerve her; to keep off intruders from making too bold with her, and to diſcourage ſtrangers from miſrepreſenting her. Antiquity, in this miniſterial view is of very great uſe; which I ſhall endeavour to ſhew as diſtinctly as may be.

But, firſt, let me premiſe a few things, in order to give the reader a clearer idea of the true ſtate of the whole caſe. It is to be conſidered, that ſcripture conſiſts of words, and that words are but ſigns, and that common uſage and acceptation is what muſt ſettle their meaning. And when any thing comes down to us in a dead language, as ſcripture now does, the cuſtomary uſe of words in that language, at the time when they were ſpoken, or written, muſt be the rule and meaſure of interpretation°; only, taking in with it, the drift and intention of the ſpeaker, or writer, ſo far as it may be certainly known, or probably preſumed from evidences, or circumſtances.

It is next to be conſidered, that there is ſomething of equivocalneſs and ambiguity, for the moſt part, in words or phraſes, though ever ſo well and wiſely choſen; and that many through ignorance, or inattention, or prepoſſeſſion may miſtake or pervert their true meaning. Subtle wits may at any time take advantage of this natural imperfection of all languages, and may

° See Rogers's Review, p. 41.—51.

may wreſt the plaineſt expreſſions from their true and certain meaning, to a falſe and foreign one. The nature of language, I ſay, is ſuch, that it may be done, and the depravity, or weakneſs of mankind, is ſuch, that it often will be done. And then diſputes will ariſe about the jarring and diſſonant interpretations, all perhaps appearing ſeverally poſſible, and all plauſibly recommended, though amongſt them all there is but one which is truly reaſonable.

It may further be conſidered, that all languages abound with metaphors, tropes, figures, or ſchemes of ſpeech; and it is allowable to interpret figuratively, allegorically, emblematically, as often as there is a neceſſity for it, or good reaſon to apprehend that the thing was written in the way of figure, allegory, or emblem. This allowable liberty may eaſily be extended too far, through want of judgment, or want of care, or of honeſty and ſincerity. Indeed, moſt of the abuſes, with regard to interpreting of ſcripture, when traced up to their fountain head, will appear to have been owing to this, that ſome will fancy the plain and obvious ſenſe unreaſonable, or abſurd, when it really is not; and will thereupon obtrude their own ſurmiſes, conjectures, prejudices upon the word of God. For, having taken their own conceits for certain truths, and having determined before hand, that the letter of ſcripture ſhall give way to them, they will of courſe rack and torture ſcripture, as far as wit, learning,

or

or invention can aſſiſt them, in order to contrive ſome conſtruction or other, which may but ſeem to favour their preconceived opinions; unleſs they chuſe rather to reject or adulterate the texts which make againſt them, or to deviſe new ſcriptures to ſerve the purpoſe.

Add to this, that the art of torturing plain words has been advanced to great perfection in theſe latter ages, ſince the revival of learning and ſciences; and eſpecially ſince the ſocinians[x] and romaniſts have taken almoſt incredible pains to make themſelves complete maſters in that way. There is nothing now almoſt, but what

[p] The ſocinian management is thus elegantly deſcribed by Abr. Calovius.

Dici non poteſt quam nefario auſu, quam profanâ impietate, quam horrendo ſacrilegio verſentur illi ſcripturarum corruptores in ſacris literis, ut ſuæ aut favere videantur, aut ſaltem non adverſari ſententiæ. Modo enim ſcripta θεόπνευ;α, partim novi, partim et imprimis veteris Teſtamenti, de ſublimi auctoritatis divinæ faſtigio deturbant; modo ſententias et periodos quaſdam ſcripturæ ſacræ in dubium revocant; modo diſtinctiones parentheſium et cola intervertunt, ac trajectionum novo ἐυρήματι Spiritûs S. ſenſum invertunt; modo per apoſtrophas, vel exclamationes mentem ſcripturæ corrumpunt; modo per conſtructiones recens excogitatas, modo per vocum ſignificationes inuſitatas, nulliſque lexicographis cognitas; modo per ἀνάλυσιν violentam, modo per ἐξήγησιν prorſus inſolentem, interdum et κατὰ διάμετρον oppoſitam et contrariam, ſacras literas detorquent: quadrata rotundis, ſupera inferis, cœlum terris miſcent, horrendâque ςρεβλότητι oracula ſanctiſſima pervertunt, deteſtandâ μεταμορφώσει tranformant. Quicquid denique apertum et clarum in ſacris literis, id veluti ſepiæ rationis ſuæ obſcurant atramento. Ipſam autem ſcripturam perplexitatis, ἀνιςορησίας, ἀπαιδευσίας, ἀναισθείας, ambiguitatis, obſcuritatis, incertitudinis, erroris, falſitatis, impie poſtulant et accuſant; ſcilicet juxta illud Hieronymi veriverbium, "Hæretici convicti de perfidiâ, conferunt ſe ad "maledicta." Vid. Wucherer. Vindic. adv. Whiſton. p. 21. A. D. 1732.

what ſome or other will attempt (if there be occaſion) to drag over into the ſervice of any cauſe, and to wreſt to what ſenſe they pleaſe, though ever ſo contrary to the words themſelves, or to the known intention of the authors or compilers. The ancient miſbelievers moſt of them were young practitioners in compariſon. For they commonly rejected or adulterated the ſcriptures which they did not like[q], not underſtanding, or however not truſting to qualifying interpretations, which might ſteal away the ſenſe, without injuring the letter.

Laſtly, It ſhould be conſidered, that God has provided no other general remedies againſt theſe and the like abuſes, or againſt our being impoſed upon by them, than what he has provided againſt any other wiles of ſatan, or any other temptation; namely, prayer and watchfulneſs, care and endeavour, and the uſe of proper means. We are no more ſecure againſt hereſy, than we are againſt any other ſins. But there are as ſtrong temptations to it (founded in natural pride, vanity, curioſity, emulation, envy, ambition, or ſometimes credulity, ſupineneſs, ſecular intereſt, or revenge) as there are other vices of a coarſer kind.

Theſe things conſidered, it will be highly expedient to take in all the helps we can procure, for the aſcertaining the true and full meaning

[q] The heretics, ſo charged, are Cerinthus, Ebion, Saturninus, Carpocrates, Cerdon, Marcion, Lucian, Apelles, Tatian, Ptolemæus, Theodotus, Artemon, Manichæus; the ophitæ, cainites, ſethoites, alogi, pepuzians, ſeverians, and perhaps ſome others.

meaning of ſacred writ, and for preſerving, ſo far as in us lies, the doctrines of Chriſt. No proper means are to be neglected, or ſet aſide, leſt we fall into error for want of the uſe of ſuch means, or be found guilty of deſpiſing the gifts of God. Now we may come to the main queſtion, whether antiquity may not be juſtly reputed one of the proper means, or how far it is ſo? In which enquiry, I ſhall proceed by ſeveral ſteps or degrees, for the clearer and more diſtinct conception of what belongs to it, under its ſeveral views.

I. The ancients who lived neareſt to the apoſtolical times, are of ſome uſe to us, conſidered merely as contemporary writers, for their diction, or phraſeology. Any other coetaneous writers, jewiſh or pagan, are of uſe in that view. But home writers, chriſtian authors, will be ſo more eſpecially, as converſant in the ſame ſubjects, and breathing the ſame ſpirit with the ſacred writers themſelves[r]. This, however, is the leaſt, and the loweſt uſe of the ancient fathers; beſides that we have but few, and thoſe very ſhort tracts, which bear ſo early a date.

II. A farther uſe of the ancient fathers is ſeen, in their letting us into the knowledge of antiquated rites and cuſtoms, upon which ſome ſcripture alluſions may be formed, and upon the knowledge of which, the true interpretation of ſome ſcripture phraſes or idioms may

[r] Vid. Dodwell. Diſſert. in Iren. in Præfat. ſ. 15. et Diſſert 1.

may in ſome meaſure depend[s]. But this general uſe is ſuch as may alſo be anſwered, in a lower degree, by any as early writings, jewiſh or pagan; as likewiſe by lexicons, or books of antiquities.

III. The ancient fathers are further uſeful, as giving us inſight into the hiſtory of the age in which the ſacred books (of the New Teſtament, I mean) were written. For there is nothing which is apt to give ſo much light to any writing, as the well underſtanding and conſidering the hiſtorical occaſion of it: a much ſurer and ſafer rule to go by, generally ſpeaking, than mere citicizing upon words; as is manifeſt in the caſe of charters, ſtatutes, records, and other ancient monuments.

IV. I come, fourthly, to mention ſome more peculiar and eminent views, in which the ancienteſt fathers may be exceeding uſeful, for fixing the ſenſe of ſcripture in controverted texts. Thoſe that lived in or near the apoſtolical times, might retain in memory what the apoſtles themſelves, or their immediate ſucceſſors thought and ſaid upon ſuch and ſuch points. And though there is no truſting, in ſuch caſe, to oral tradition, diſtinct from ſcripture, nor to written, diſagreeing with ſcripture; yet written accounts, conſonant to ſcripture, are of uſe to confirm and ſtrengthen ſcripture, and to aſcertain its true meaning. Ignatius, for inſtance, had been intimately converſant

[s] Dodwell, Diſſert. in Iren. 1. C. 44.

verſant with the apoſtles[t], and was a diſciple of St. John[u]: and therefore he may reaſonably be preſumed to have juſtly repreſented the mind of the apoſtles in the doctrine he has left behind him, extant at this day. This the learned Moſheim has admitted, and even contended for[x], though otherwiſe no zealous admirer of the ancient fathers.

The like may be ſaid of Polycarp, who had been taught immediately by the apoſtles, and had converſed with many who had ſeen our Lord[y]. He was alſo particularly acquainted with St. John[z], was one of his diſciples, and ordained biſhop of Smyrna by his hands[a]. His doctrine, ſo far as it reaches, and may be certainly depended upon as his, (whether we have it at firſt, or at ſecond hand) will be of great uſe for confirming the ſenſe of ſcripture, being a ſecondary atteſtation of the ſame doctrine: which Moſheim, before mentioned, does alſo allow, and plead for[b]. Our moſt

[t] Chryſoſtom. Hom. in Ignat. Tom. i. p. 499. Socrat. Eccl. H. L. vi. C. 8.

[u] Act. Ignat. p. 9. edit. Grab. in Spicileg.

[x] Si doctrinam quam hic publice propoſuit, intelligimus, id ſimul quod Petrus, Joannes, cæterique ſervatoris amici ſenſerint, et Antiochenis tradiderint, exploratum habemus. Moſheim Vindic. contr. Toland. ſ. i. C. 8. Compare Abp. Wake, C. 10. p. 111. 114. 2d. edit.

[y] Iren. L. iii. C. 3. Euſeb. E. H. L. iv. C. 14.

[z] Iren. Ep. ad Florin. int. Fragment. p. 340. Euſeb. E. H. v. 20.

[a] Hieronym. Catal. Scriptor. Eccl. xvii.
Tertullian. Præſcript. C. xxxii.

[b] Indubitatæ itaque fidei teſtem rurſus habemus, non modo doctrinæ quam ipſe cætui ſuo tradidit, ſed et ejus quam optimus magiſter diſcedens ſuis reliquit. Moſheim ibid. p. 237.
Abp. Wake's apoſtolical fathers, C. x. p. 111.

moſt reverend metropolitan, ſpeaking of the authority of the very early fathers, ſums it up in theſe ſeveral particulars. "1. That they were "contemporary with the apoſtles, and inſtructed "by them. 2. That they were men of an "eminent character in the church, and therefore "ſuch as could not be ignorant of what was "taught in it. 3. They were careful to preſerve "the doctrine of Chriſt in its purity, and to "oppoſe ſuch as went about to corrupt it. "4. They were men not only of a perfect piety, "but of great courage and conſtancy, and there-"fore ſuch as cannot be ſuſpected to have had "any deſign to prevaricate in this matter. 5. They "were endued with a large portion of the Holy "Spirit, and, as ſuch, could hardly err in what "they delivered as the goſpel of Chriſt. 6. Their "writings were approved by the church in thoſe "days, which could not be miſtaken in its ap-"probation of them[c]."

Mr. Bayle allows, that, "in the days of "the apoſtles, or their firſt diſciples, it had "been eaſy to diſcover thoſe who gave the "ſcriptures a wrong interpretation, becauſe "the infallibility of the apoſtles, (who might "have been conſulted by word, or by let-"ter) and the freſh remembrance of the verbal "inſtructions they had given their diſciples, "and paſtors whom themſelves had conſe-"crated, was a ready means for clearing any "doubt

[c] Abp. Wake's apoſtolical fathers, C. x. p. 110.

"doubt, or diſputed point[a]." It appears then to be on all hands agreed, that thoſe moſt early fathers are competent witneſſes of the doctrine of the church in their days; nay, and of the doctrine alſo of Chriſt, and his apoſtles, to whom they immediately ſucceeded: and therefore their general ſenſe is of ſignal uſe (ſo far as it reaches) to aſcertain the interpretation of ſcripture, and more eſpecially as being conſonant to the eaſy and natural import of the words themſelves.

The like may be ſaid in proportion, and in a lower degree, of the writings of Juſtin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenæus, and Clemens Alexandrinus[b]; eminent perſonages, who flouriſhed within 50, or 60, or at moſt 90 years of the apoſtolical age. Their nearneſs to the time, their known fidelity, and their admirable endowments, ordinary and extraordinary, add great weight to their teſtimony, or doctrine, and make it a probable rule of interpretation in the prime things. But there is another conſideration to follow in its place, which will give it ſtill greater ſtrength of probability, than what I have here ſuggeſted. As to later fathers, the argument, in

[a] Bayle's Supplement to Philoſophical Commentary, p. 692.

[b] Clemens of Alexandria, the lateſt of the four, yet teſtifies of himſelf, that he had received his doctrine from ſeveral diſciples of the very chief apoſtles, who had truly preſerved the tradition of the bleſſed doctrine, as coming directly from the holy apoſtles, Peter, James, and Paul. Strom. L. i. p. 322. Conf. Grabe. Inſtances of Omiſſions, and Defects, &c. p. 9.

in this view, loſes its force more and more, the lower we deſcend. Yet it deſerves our notice, that the fathers of the third and fourth centuries had the advantage of many written accounts of the doctrine of the former ages, which have ſince been loſt; and therefore their teſtimonies alſo are of conſiderable weight, and are a mark of direction to us, not to be ſlighted in the main things. Neither indeed is this ſaying any thing very highly of them, but may be thought rather, to be ſetting them too low, and ſinking them beneath their real value. For the teſtimonies of jews, heretics, or pagans, ſo far as we can depend upon them, muſt be allowed to carry in them the ſame uſe, where they teſtify any thing of the general doctrine, or practice of the chriſtian church, in their times. Pliny, Lucian, Celſus, and Julian (to name no more) are all uſeful to us in this view, as they give ſome light into the doctrine of the firſt and pureſt ages. They confirm the fact, that ſuch doctrines were then generally taught, and they corroborate other evidences. Socinus ſeems to have allowed more to one teſtimony of Lucian, than to many chriſtian evidences[c]. No doubt, but it was ſome advantage to it in his eſteem,

[c] Nec vero nobis quidquam hactenus legere contigit, quod trini iſtius Dei, a chriſtianis jam tum recepti et culti, fidem facere videatur magis, quam quæ ex dialogo, qui Philopatris inſcribitur, et inter Luciani opera numeratur, ad id probandum affert Genebrardus, L. 1. et 2. de Trinitate. Socin. adv. Eutrop. C. xv. p. 698. op.

eſteem, that it came from a pagan: though ſtill it had not weight enough to conquer his prejudices. For he never wanted evaſions. But I paſs on to what I intend farther. All kinds of evidences are of uſe, which can bring us any light, as to what the doctrine of the church was in the beſt and pureſt ages. And when we are once advanced ſo far as to come to any certainty about that fact, then we have ground whereon to ſtand, and can build our argument upon it.

V. The next conſideration therefore is this, that a very particular regard is due to the public acts of the ancient church, appearing in creeds made uſe of in baptiſm, and in the cenſures paſſed upon heretics. And the obſervable harmony and unanimity of the ſeveral churches[d], in ſuch acts, is a circumſtance which adds irreſiſtible force to them. It is not at all likely, that any whole church of thoſe early times ſhould vary from apoſtolical doctrine in things of moment. But it is, morally ſpeaking, abſurd to imagine, that

[d] Traditionem itaque apoſtolorum in toto mundo manifeſtatam in omni eccleſiâ adeſt reſpicere omnibus qui vera volunt videre. Et habemus annumerare eos, qui ab apoſtolis inſtituti ſunt epiſcopi in eccleſiis, et ſucceſſores eorum uſque ad nos, qui nihil tale docuerunt, neque cognoverunt quale ab his deliratur. Iren. L. iii. C. 3.

Itaque tot ac tantæ eccleſiæ una illa ab apoſtolis prima ex quâ omnes. Sic omnes primæ, et apoſtolicæ, dum una omnes probant unitatem; dum eſt illis communicatio pacis, et appellatio fraternitatis, et conteſſeratio hoſpitalitatis: quæ jura non alia ratio regit, quam ejuſdem ſacramenti una traditio. Tertul. Præſcript. C. 20.

that all the churches ſhould combine in the ſame error, and conſpire together to corrupt the doctrine of Chriſt[e]. This is the argument which Irenæus and Tertullian inſiſt much upon, and triumph in, over the heretics of their times, and it is obliquely glanced upon by Hegeſippus and Clemens Alexandrinus of the ſame ſecond century, and by Origen alſo of the third. The argument was undoubtedly true and juſt, as it then ſtood, while there were no breaks in the ſucceſſion of doctrine, but a perfect unanimity of the churches all along, in the prime articles: though, afterwards, the force of this argument came to be obſcured, and almoſt loſt, by taking in things foreign to it, and blending it with what happened in later times. The force of it could laſt no longer than ſuch unanimity laſted. I ſay, while the churches were all unanimous in the main things (as they were in Irenæus's time, and Tertullian's, and for more than a century after) that very unanimity was a preſumptive argument, that their faith was right, derived down to them from the apoſtles themſelves. For it was highly unreaſonable to ſuppoſe, that thoſe ſeveral churches, very diſtant from each other in place, and of different languages, and under no common viſible

[e] Ecquid veriſimile eſt, ut tot ac tantæ in unam fidem erraverint? nullus inter multos eventus unus eſt. Exitus variaſſe debuerat error doctrinæ eccleſiarum. Ceterum, quod apud multos unum invenitur, non eſt erratum, ſed traditum. Tertul. ibid. C. 28.

ble head, ſhould all unite in the ſame errors, and deviate uniformly from their rule at once. But that they ſhould all agree in the ſame common faith, might eaſily be accounted for, as ariſing from the ſame common cauſe, which could be no other but the common delivery of the ſame uniform faith and doctrine to all the churches by the apoſtles themſelves[f]. Such unanimity could never come by chance, but muſt be derived from one common ſource: and therefore the harmony of their doctrine was in itſelf a pregnant argument of the truth of it[g]. As to the fact, that the churches were thus unanimous in all the prime things, in thoſe days, Irenæus, who was a very knowing perſon, and who had come far eaſt to ſettle in the weſt, bears ample teſtimony to it[h]. Tertullian, in the two paſſages laſt cited from him, teſtifies the ſame thing, as to the unanimity of the churches of thoſe times in the fundamentals of chriſtian doctrine. Hegeſippus, contemporary with Irenæus, gives much the ſame account of the ſucceſſion of true doctrine, down to his own time, in the ſeveral churches.

[f] See this argument very well explained and enforced by Dr. Sherlock, in his preſent State of the Socinian controverſy, C. 2. ſ. 2. p. 60, &c. Chillingworth, C. 2. ſ. 147. p. 98.

[g] Vero ſimile ſit complures eccleſias originis apoſtolicæ, regionibus linguâque diſſitas, eam doctrinæ concordiam ab uno fonte hauſiſſe, utpote quæ a caſu non introducta videtur. Sam. Baſnag. Annal. Tom. i. 742.

[h] Iren. L. i. C. 10. alias 3. L. iii. C. 3, 4.

churches[i]. Clemens of Alexandria means the ſame thing, where he recommends the faith of the univerſal church as one, and as more ancient than hereſies[k]. And Origen of the third century teſtifies the ſame of the church in his time, and argues in the ſame manner from it[l]. Irenæus and Tertullian were both of them ſo ſtrongly perſuaded of the certainty, firſt, of the fact, and next of the inference from it, that they ſcrupled not to urge it as a very full and convincing proof of the apoſtolical faith, ſingly conſidered[m], and abſtracted from ſcripture proof. An argument which there is no need to be jealous of, if it be but rightly underſtood, and

[i] Ἐν ἑκάστῃ δὲ διαδοχῇ, καὶ ἐν ἑκάστῃ πόλει, ἕτως ἔχει, ὡς ὁ νόμος κηρύττει, καὶ οἱ προφῆται, καὶ ὁ κύριος. Hegeſipp. ap. Euſeb. L. iv. C. 22.

[k] Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. 898, 899. Conf. Strom. i. p. 322.

[l] Cum multi ſint, qui ſe putant ſcire quæ Chriſti ſunt, et nonnulli eorum diverſa prioribus ſentiant, ſervetur vero eccleſiaſtica prædicatio per ſucceſſionis ordinem ab apoſtolis tradita, et uſque ad præſens in eccleſiis permanens: illa ſola credenda eſt veritas, quæ in nullo ab eccleſiaſticâ traditione diſcordat. Origen. in Apolog. Pamph. inter op. Hieron. Tom. V. p. 223.

[m] Tantæ igitur oſtenſiones cum ſint, non oportet adhuc quærere apud alios veritatem, quam facile eſt ab eccleſiâ ſumere, &c. —Quid enim, etſi de aliquâ modicâ quæſtione diſceptatio eſſet, nonne oporteret in antiquiſſimas recurrere eccleſias, in quibus apoſtoli converſati ſunt, et ab eis de præſenti quæſtione ſumere quod certum et re liquidum eſt? Quid autem ſi neque apoſtoli quidem ſcripturas reliquiſſent nobis, nonne oportebat ordinem ſequi traditionis, quam tradiderunt iis quibus committebant eccleſias? Cui ordinationi aſſentiunt multæ gentes barbarorum eorum qui in chriſtum credunt, ſine chartâ et atramento ſcriptam habentes per ſpiritum in cordibus ſuis ſalutem, et veterem traditionem diligenter cuſtodientes, &c. Iren. L. iii. C. 4.

and limited to ſuch circumſtances as it was grounded upon. For the meaning was not, that apoſtolical churches could never err, nor that tradition would be always a ſafe rule to go by: but ſuch tradition as that was, which might eaſily be traced up to the apoſtles, by the help of writings then extant, (as eaſily as we may now trace up the doctrine of our church to the reign of Charles, or of James the firſt) ſuch a tradition might be depended upon. Beſides that the unanimity of the churches all the world over (which could not be rationally accounted for on any other ſuppoſition but that they had been ſo taught from the beginning) confirmed the ſame thing. The argument in this light, and in thoſe circumſtances, was a very good one. But when thoſe circumſtances came to be altered, and there had been ſeveral breaks in the ſucceſſion of doctrine, and that too even in the apoſtolical churches, then there could be no arguing in the ſame preciſe way, as before. Only thus far they might argue, in after times (upon a ſuppoſition that their faith could be proved to be the ſame as in the former ages) that ſince their doctrine was ſtill that very doctrine which the churches held while they were unanimous and had admitted no breaks, therefore it is ſuch as was from the beginning in the church of Chriſt. In this manner we can reaſon even at this day, and can thereby make Irenæus's or Tertullian's

argument our own[n]; provided we have firſt proved that the faith we contend for, is the very ſame that obtained in the churches of that age.

But before I leave this head, I would obſerve ſomething more particularly of Tertullian's manner of expreſſing himſelf in this caſe. He did not only conceive that an argument might be drawn from tradition alone, abſtracting from ſcripture, but he preferred that way of arguing, in diſputes with heretics, as a ſhorter, eaſier, nay and ſurer method of confuting them, than engaging with them upon the foot of ſcripture[o]. This

[n] Ad hanc itaque formam probabuntur ab illis eccleſiis, quæ licet nullum ex apoſtolis, vel apoſtolicis, auctorem ſuum proferant, ut multo poſteriores, quæ denique quotidie inſtituuntur, tamen in eâdem fide conſpirantes, non minus apoſtolicæ deputantur pro conſanguinitate doctrinæ. Tertul. Præſcript. C. 32.

[o] Quid promovebis, exercitatiſſime ſcripturarum, cum ſi quid defenderis, negatur; ex diverſo, ſi quid negaveris, defendatur. Et ut quidem nihil perdes, niſi vocem in contentione; nihil conſequeris, niſi bilem de blaſphematione. Ille vero, ſi quis eſt, cujus causâ in congreſſum deſcendis ſcripturarum, ut eum dubitantem confirmes, ad veritatem, an magis ad hæreſes deverget? Hoc ipſo motus, quod te videat nihil promoviſſe, æquo gradu negandi, et defendendi adversâ parte, ſtatu certe dari, altercatione incertior diſcedet, neſciens quam hæreſin judicet. Hæc utique et ipſi habent in nos retorquere. Neceſſe eſt enim et illos dicere, a nobis potius adulteria ſcripturarum, et expoſitionum mendacia inferri, qui proinde ſibi defendant veritatem. Ergo non ad ſcripturas provocandum, nec in his conſtituendum certamen, in quibus aut nulla, aut incerta victoria eſt, aut par incertæ.—Ordo rerum deſiderabat illud prius proponi, quod nunc ſolum diſputandum eſt, quibus competat fides ipſa, cujus ſunt ſcripturæ; a quo, et per quos, et quando, et quibus ſit tradita diſciplina quâ fiunt chriſtiani. Ubi enim apparuerit eſſe veritatem et diſciplinæ et fidei chriſtianæ, illic erit veritas ſcripturarum, et expoſitionum, et omnium traditionum chriſtianarum. Tertull. Præſcript. C. 17, 18.

This may appear, to us now, an odd way of talking. But if it be taken as he meant it, and with a view only to the then preſent circumſtances, I believe, it will be found to turn out right. He could not mean that the tradition of the ſenſe of ſcripture, was more certain than the tradition of the words, or books of ſcripture: neither could he deſign to intimate that ſcripture texts did not themſelves afford as certain, or more certain proofs of a doctrine than tradition could do, among perſons qualified to judge in a critical way: neither could he imagine, that ſcripture ſhould not be made uſe of, or ſhould not be looked upon as the principal thing, in written debates againſt hereticks; for no man makes more, or better uſe of ſcripture in that way than himſelf does. All he ſeems to have meant was, that in verbal conferences with heretics, in the preſence of weak and infirm chriſtians, the wiſeſt way would be, not to engage the adverſaries on the foot of ſcripture, (to bring on a debate about the canon of ſcripture, and the ſtrict meaning of words or phraſes, and ſo to to diſcuſs the whole in a logical and critical way, tireſome to ordinary chriſtians, and commonly fruitleſs[p]) but to put the

[p] Scripturas obtendunt, et hâc ſuâ audaciâ ſtatim quoſdam movent: in ipſo vero congreſſu firmos quidem fatigant, infirmos capiunt, medios cum ſcrupulo dimittunt. Hunc igitur potiſſimum gradum obſtruimus, non admittendos eos ad ullam de ſcripturis diſputationem. Si hæc ſint illæ vires eorum, uti eas habere poſſint, diſpici debet, cui competat poſſeſſio ſcripturarum, ne is admittatur ad eam, cui nullo modo competit. Ibid. C. 15. Conf. C. 37.

the iſſue of the cauſe upon a few plain and ſhort queſtions, ſuch as common chriſtians could better judge of. It was eaſy to diſcern, what party of men had been ſucceſſors to the apoſtles, and had in conſtant ſucceſſion made up the body of the church, preſerving the ſame faith with great unanimity. This argument from tradition, was an argument drawn from ſenſible fact, and was much more affecting, obvious, and popular, than dry altercations about the authenticity of the books of ſcripture, or the preciſe meaning of words; and it was certain enough, at that time, to be depended upon: and therefore Tertullian recommended that method of debate, in ſuch verbal conferences, rather than any other. Wherein to me he ſeems to have judged very well upon the prudential caſe, and like a wiſe and a ſagacious man[q]. Nevertheleſs, as often as he employed his pen in controverſy with heretics, and drew up polemical tracts, though he would not omit to mention the additional advantage he had[r] in point of preſcription, or tradition, yet he choſe to paſs it off in ſhort hints, and not to dwell upon it, but rather to reſt the iſſue of the main cauſe upon ſcripture, and reaſon.

A learned foreign divine has indeed blamed Tertullian for his conduct in this affair, as derogating

[q] See Stillingfleet. Anſwer to ſeveral treatiſes. Works, Vol. v. p. 79, 80. Dodwell. Diſſertat. in Iren. iii. ſ. 30. p. 282, 283. Taylor Lib. of Proph. p. 124.

[r] Vid. Tertullian. contr. Marc. L. i. C. 1. 20. L. iii. C. 1. contr. Prax. C. 2.

derogating from the authority of ſcripture, by laying ſuch ſtreſs upon tradition: which appears not to be a juſt cenſure; but that learned writer runs into the other extreme, while he avers, that it is by ſcripture only, that the verity, or antiquity of a doctrine may be proved[s]. There are two ways of proving the antiquity, and conſequently the verity of a doctrine; namely, ſcripture and church hiſtory: and theſe two differ only in the manner of proof, or in the degree of moral certainty. Can we prove, for inſtance, what were the tenets of the ancient heretics, by the help of church hiſtory and records; and cannot we as well prove what were the tenets of ancient chriſtians in the ſame way? It is true, we might more certainly prove what thoſe heretics held, from their own books, if we had them; and ſo we may more certainly prove what was the faith of the firſt chriſtians, from ſcripture, rather than from church records. But ſtill the ſame thing is proved both ways, and by two kinds of evidences differing only, as I ſaid, in degree of probability, or moral certainty. And therefore the learned Moſheim, as I before took notice[t], ſcruples not to aſſert in broad terms, that the antiquity of the chriſtian faith is proved from the

[s] Huc illa referenda ſunt effata, quibus ſcripturæ ſacræ derogare auctoritati videtur, cum tamen ea ſola ſit, ex qua et veritas et antiquitas dogmatis cujuſdam probari queat. Buddei Iſagog. Vol. i. p. 997.

[t] See above, p. 367.

the writings of Ignatius, and Polycarp[u]: and he allows the ſame thing with reſpect to Clemens Romanus, and Hegeſippus[v], and Caius[w], and Irenæus[x], and, by parity of reaſon, to all other church writers whoſe accounts may be depended upon[y]. The admitting ſuch a ſecondary proof, in this caſe, is not derogating from ſcripture authority, but is confirming and ſtrengthening it in more views than one: as it is accepting the ſame kind of proof here, which we accept, in another caſe, with reſpect to the canon of ſcripture; and as it is corroborating the ſcripture account of the chriſtian faith, with collateral evidences, both to illuſtrate and inforce it. Not that one would, at this time of day, preſume to reſt an article of faith upon church records alone, or upon any thing beſides ſcripture. But while the ſuperior proof from ſacred writ is the ground of our faith[z], the ſubordinate

[u] Moſheim. Vindic. adv. Toland. C. 8. p. 221, 222, 223.
[v] Ibid. p. 218. [w] Ibid. p. 224. [x] Ibid. 238.

[y] It is obſervable of Polycarp, in particular, that he convinced and converted great numbers to the true faith, by the ſtrength of tradition, being a ſenſible argument, and more affecting at that time, than any diſpute from the bare letter of ſcripture could be. [See Irenæus, Lib. iii. C. 3. p. 177.] It was under Anicetus, about the year 145. See Pearſon, op. poſth. C. 14, &c. Dodwell, C. 13.

[z] Scripture is the ground of our faith, conſidered as the infallible word of God. But then that it is really the word of God, and that ſuch is the ſenſe of this or that text, ordinarily ſtands only upon moral proof; ſo that our faith at length reſolves into moral evidence, as it is a known rule, that the concluſion follows the weaker of the premiſes, and can be no ſtronger than that

ſubordinate proof from antiquity may be a good mark of direction for the interpretation of ſcripture in the prime doctrines[a]. If we can prove from ancient records what that faith was which obtained ſo univerſally in the ſecond century, and later, we can then argue from it in like manner as Irenæus, Hegeſippus, Tertullian, yea and Clemens alſo and Origen did, and can make the like uſe of it againſt thoſe that pervert ſcripture. Only, indeed, there will be this difference, that the argument, as now urged, is become one of the learned kind, and therefore not ſo well adapted to common capacities as it formerly was. And it is ſomewhat weaker to us, in another reſpect, as we have not ſo many evidences now extant, as thoſe writers then had, whereby to prove ſuch conſtant ſucceſſion of doctrine ſo long, and ſuch unanimity of the churches in profeſſing it. But notwithſtanding, we have evidences ſufficient to perſuade rational

that is. But then again, it is to be conſidered, that the ſtrength of moral evidence, in the general, reſolves at laſt into divine veracity and faithfulneſs; ſince God has ſo made us, as to lay us under an inevitable neceſſity of ſubmitting commonly to ſuch evidence, and he cannot be ſuppoſed (without manifeſt abſurdity and blaſphemy) to have thus expoſed the wiſeſt, and moſt pious, and moſt conſiderate men to fatal and endleſs deluſions. So then, in the laſt reſult, faith again reſolves into, or reſts upon the truth and goodneſs of God.

[a] Quoties de ſcripti ſenſu quæritur, magnam vim habere ſolet, tum uſus ſequens, tum prudentum auctoritas; quod etiam in divinis ſcriptis ſequendum eſt. Neque enim probabile eſt, eccleſias quæ ab apoſtolis conſtitutæ ſunt, aut ſubito, aut omnes defeciſſe ab iis, quæ apoſtoli breviter præſcripta, ore liberalius explicaverant. Grotius de Jur. B. et P. L. i. C. 2. ſ. 9. p. 60.

rational men; and the argument is ſtill a good one[b], though with ſome abatements.

VI. There is one conſideration more, tending ſtill to ſtrengthen the former, and which muſt by no means be omitted: namely, that the chariſmata, the extraordinary gifts were then frequent, viſibly reſted in and upon the church, and there only. I have occaſionally hinted ſomething of this matter before[c], ſo far as concerned Irenæus, and ſhall now throw in ſome additional evidences to make good the ſame thing. Juſtin Martyr is a witneſs of the frequency of the miraculous operations in his time: and he makes uſe of it, in diſpute with Trypho[d], as an unanſwerable argument in behalf of chriſtianity againſt the jews; which S. Paul himſelf had done before him[e]. Irenæus, as obſerved above, made the like uſe of it againſt heretics: and ſo does Tertullian, though in remote hints, and ſomewhat more obſcurely[f]. Thoſe extraordinary gifts continued in a good meaſure, though decreaſing gradually, for the three firſt centuries at leaſt[g]. So then, beſides oral tradition for

[b] "This is an unanſwerable argument, as long as we can "ſuppoſe the tradition of the catholic faith, and the commu- "nion of the church was preſerved entire: which it viſibly "was, at leaſt till the firſt Nicene council. And had we no "other ways to know it, we might learn the faith of the catho- "lic church, by its oppoſition to thoſe hereſies which it con- "demned." Sherlock's preſent ſtate of Socin. controv. p. 54.

[c] See above, p. 299.

[d] Juſtin Martyr. Dial. p. 308, 315. ed Par. alias 315, 329.

[e] Gal. iii 2. [f] Tertullian Præſcript. C. 28, 29.

[g] Vid. Spencer in Notis ad Origen. contra Celſ. p. 5, &c.

Dodwell,

for the faith of the ancient churches, which was leaſt to be depended upon, or laſted but a little time; beſides written accounts which might more ſecurely be confided in; beſides the unanimity of doctrine in all the churches, which was itſelf an argument that it had been from the beginning; I ſay, beſides all theſe, the teſtimony of the Spirit viſibly reſiding in the church, and diſcovering itſelf in ſupernatural operations, that was a further evidence of the truth of the doctrine then generally held. For it is by no means probable, that thoſe primitive churches, ſo highly favoured from above, ſo plentifully enlightened and comforted by the holy ſpirit of God, ſhould be permitted to fall into any dangerous errors, or ſhould not preſerve, at leaſt in points of importance, the true and ancient faith, derived from Chriſt and his apoſtles. But that this argument may appear to greater advantage, I ſhall take leave to borrow the excellent words of an abler hand[h], which has ſet it forth in a very true and ſtrong light.

" It is, I think, impoſſible, in a moral ſenſe, " that thoſe good men ſhould ſucceſſively con- " cur to impoſe upon the church a falſe inter- " pretation of notorious paſſages of the ſacred " writings, for the following reaſons.

" 1. That

Dodwell, Diſſert. in Irenæum. ii. Diſſert. Cyprianic. iv. Remarks on Chriſtianity, &c. Part i. continued, p. 51, &c.

[h] Dr. Knight's preface to his eight ſermons, p. 4, 5, 6. Compare Dr. Berriman's hiſtorical account, p. 2, 3, &c.

" 1. That the ſpirit of God was given to " the church, to guide and inſtruct it in neceſ- " ſary truth.

" 2. That according to the records of thoſe " early ages, the extraordinary gifts of the " ſpirit of God, continuing in the church, " were undoubted evidences of his preſence " with it.

" 3. That it cannot be ſuppoſed, while the " Spirit of God was preſent with the church " in ſo remarkable a manner, and the church " itſelf ſo little removed from the times of the " apoſtles, that the letter of ſcripture, eſpe- " cially in matters of greateſt concern, ſhould " be generally underſtood in another ſenſe than " what was agreeable to the Spirit of God, " and to that which the apoſtles had taught " and delivered.

" 4. That the doctors of the church, through " the difficulty of the times, and the dangers " they were expoſed to on account of religion, " were more concerned to prepare for the bleſ- " ſings of another world, by recommending truth " to the conſciences of men, than to provide " for the fleſh, and the enjoyments of the pre- " ſent, by dividing the church, and ſeducing the " ſimple with pernicious doctrines.

" 5. That their writings ſuppoſe, or expreſsly " affirm, that ſcripture was received in an uni- " form ſenſe, in the churches of Chriſt.

" 6. The conſequence of which is, that when- " ſoever it appears, that the doctors of the

" church

" church ſucceſſively agree, from the very be-
" ginning, in an uniform[a] interpretation of cer-
" tain paſſages of the ſacred writings, relating
" to the chief and fundamental articles of re-
" vealed truths; ſuch interpretation ought to be
" received as the mind of the ſpirit in the
" aforeſaid paſſages: and concluſions drawn
" from ſuch expoſitions are not founded on
" the doctrines of men, but the mind of the
" ſpirit contained and conveyed in the letter of
" ſcripture."

This reaſoning I apprehend to be juſt and ſolid, and to carry much greater weight with it, than any the moſt ingenious conceits, and ſurpriſing ſubtleties of the polonian brethren, whereby they have laboured to give ſomething of a gloſs or colour to their novel conſtruction of the ſacred oracles. But to be a little more diſtinct and particular, I proceed to build upon the foundations here laid, for the more fully demonſtrating the uſe of antiquity.

VII. The leaſt that we can infer from what hath been already ſaid, is, that the ſenſe of the ancients once known, is an uſeful check upon any new interpretations of ſcripture affecting the main doctrines. It has a negative voice, if I may ſo call it, in ſuch a caſe. And it is reaſon ſufficient for throwing off any ſuch novel expoſitions, that they croſs upon the undoubted faith of all the ancient churches, or contain ſome doctrine,

[a] Iren. L. iv. C. 35. alias 69.

doctrine, as of moment to be received, which the ancients univerſally rejected, or never admitted[b]. This negative way of arguing, is, I think, generally allowed, and can hardly bear any controverſy. Biſhop Stillingfleet obſerves to this purpoſe, "That it is ſufficient preſcription "againſt any thing which can be alledged out "of ſcripture, that if it appear contrary to the "ſenſe of the catholic church from the beginning, it ought not to be looked upon as the "true meaning of ſcripture. All this ſecurity "is built upon this ſtrong preſumption, that "nothing contrary to the neceſſary articles "of faith, ſhould be held by the catholic "church, whoſe very being depends upon the "belief of thoſe articles which are neceſſary to "ſalvation[c]."

The famous Daillé, whom no man can ſuſpect of partiality towards the ancients, acknowledges as much as I have mentioned, where he ſays, "What probability is there that thoſe "holy doctors of former ages, from whoſe hands "chriſtianity hath been derived down unto us, "ſhould be ignorant of any of thoſe things, "which

[b] Sicut in legibus humanis valet quidem ad ſenſum indagandum, verborum ac locutionum cognito, antecedentium et conſequentium ſeries, conſideratio ejus quæ quoque libro tractatur materiæ, ſed hæc omnia ita ſunt dirigenda, ne impingant in id quod ab initio publicatæ legis de re quâque receptum et judiciis approbatum fuit; ita in legibus divinis quidem, ſed humano more per verba, et verborum ſigna literas, expreſſis, eadem interpretationi circumdanda ſunt repagula. Grotius, Rivet. Apologet. diſcuſſ. p. 685. Conf. 724.

[c] Stillingfleet's rational account. C. 2. p. 59.

" which had been revealed and recommended " by our Saviour as important, and neceſſary " to ſalvation?—That they ſhould all of them " have been ignorant of any article that is ne- " ceſſarily requiſite to ſalvation, is altogether im- " poſſible. For, after this account, they ſhould " all have been deprived of ſalvation, which, " I ſuppoſe, every honeſt mind would tremble " at the thought of[d] "

Dr. Whitby, who was not prejudiced on the ſide of the fathers, ſeems to carry the point rather father, in theſe words.

" In ſuch doctrines as were rejected by the " univerſal church as hereſies, Auſtin ſaith truly, " that it was ſufficient cauſe to reject them, " becauſe the church held the contrary, they " being ſuch as did oppoſe her rule of faith, " or ſymbol, univerſally received; and that it " was ſufficient to perſuade any man, he ought " not to embrace any of the doctrines of here- " tics, as articles of faith, becauſe the church, " who could not be deficient in any point of " neceſſary faith, did not receive them. This " way of arguing negatively, we therefore, with " St. Auſtin, do allow: the univerſal church " knows no ſuch doctrine; ergo, it is no arti- " cle I am obliged to receive as any part of " chriſtian faith[e]." Thus far he at that time: and in another treatiſe which he publiſhed in Latin

[d] Daillé, Uſe of the fathers, C. vi. p. 188. Engl. edit.

[e] Whitby's Treatiſe of Tradition, A. D. 1689, Part ii. C. 12. p. 131.

Latin 25 years after, when it is certain he had no very friendly diſpoſition towards the fathers, yet ſtill he thought himſelf obliged to admit ſuch a negative argument[f] as he had before admitted. A negative argument therefore being allowed, (as indeed there is plain reaſon for it) it muſt be allowed alſo, that the fathers are of uſe to us, ſo far as ſuch an argument can be of uſe: and that the ancients may be of great uſe in the church, in this view, is very apparent, being that they ſerve as an outwork (which Daillé takes notice of) for the repelling the preſumption of thoſe who would forge a new faith[g].

For example, they are of uſe, in this view, againſt the romaniſts, with reſpect to the novel and ſupernumerary articles of the Trent creed, or creed of Pope Pius IV. impoſed upon the conſciences of men, as neceſſary to ſalvation.

The ancients are likewiſe of uſe to us under the ſame view, againſt the ſocinians, who innovate in doctrines of the higheſt importance, teaching things contrary to the faith of all the primitive churches; things wherein chriſtian worſhip

[f] Diſtinguendum eſt inter traditiones de rebus creditu factuque neceſſariis, et non neceſſariis. Traditionibus ad fidem moreſque neceſſariis fides adhibenda eſt, utpote ſine quibus nec fides nec vita chriſtiana eſſe poteſt: adeo ut argumentum negativum in his omnibus certiſſimum eſt; hoc vel illud inter fidei morumve dogmata neceſſaria prius locum non obtinuit, ergo nec hâc ætate creditu, factuve neceſſarium dici poſſit; quoniam eccleſia in neceſſariis nunquam deficit. Whitby, Diſſertat. de Scriptur. Interpretatione, Præf. p. 94.

[g] Daillé, Uſe of the Fathers, p. 190.

ſhip as well as faith and hope, are very nearly and deeply concerned. It is ſufficient reaſon for rejecting ſuch novelties, and the interpretations which they are founded upon, that the chriſtian world, in the beſt and pureſt times either knew nothing of them, or rejected them.

The like may be ſaid with reſpect to the arian doctrines, if any man ſhall preſume to obtrude them upon us as articles of faith. It is a ſufficient reaſon for not receiving either them, or the interpretations brought to ſupport them, that the ancients, in the beſt and pureſt times, either knew nothing of them, or if they did, condemned them[h]. It has indeed been pretended, that the ancients, in general, ſuppoſed God the Father to be naturally governor over the Son and Holy Ghoſt: but no proof has ever been made of it, nor ever can be. On the contrary, it will appear upon a careful inquiry, as I have particularly

[h] "In the doctrine of the deity of Chriſt, or of the Trinity, "though the ſubtlety of ſuch modern heretics as oppoſe either "of thoſe, may ſo far prevail on perſons, either not of ſufficient "judgment, or not ſufficiently verſed in the ſcriptures, as at "preſent to make them acknowledge the places are not ſo "clear as they imagined them to be; yet their being always "otherwiſe interpreted by the catholic church, or the chriſtian "ſocieties of all ages, lays this potent prejudice againſt all "ſuch attempts, as not to believe ſuch interpretations true, "till they give a juſt account why, if the belief of theſe "doctrines were not neceſſary, the chriſtians of all ages ſince "the apoſtles times, did ſo unanimouſly agree to them, that "when any began firſt to oppoſe them, they were declared and "condemned for heretics for their pains." Stillingfleet, rational account, C. 2. p. 58.

particularly obſerved in another place[i], that the ancients never did, never conſiſtently could intend any ſuch thing; but that Arius and his confederates innovated in maintaining that doctrine, and were condemned for it immediately, upon their firſt introducing it. But it is needleſs to urge here (had not the courſe of my argument led to it) that arianiſm was no matter of neceſſary faith, in the eſteem of the ancients, having proved in theſe papers that the contrary to it was. Only, I was here to obſerve the uſe which might be made of the negative argument, ſuppoſing we could go no farther, or had nothing more to plead from antiquity.

VIII. I would next advance a ſtep farther than the mere negative argument can directly carry us: for, I conceive, that a juſt inference may be drawn from that conceſſion, which will extend our views ſomewhat beyond what I have juſt now mentioned. If the ancients could not be univerſally ignorant of any neceſſary doctrine, ſince it is morally abſurd that they ſhould be deficient in neceſſaries; by parity of reaſon it muſt be allowed, that they could not generally fall into fundamental errors; becauſe that alſo would be failing in neceſſaries, in as much as nothing can be more neceſſary in our religious concernments than to ſtand clear of all pernicious or dangerous miſtakes. From whence it follows, that

[i] Third defence, or farther Vindication, C. v. p. 108, &c.

that whatever the ancient churches univerſally admitted as a neceſſary article of faith, muſt at the loweſt, be ſafe doctrine[k]. And becauſe it is hard to conceive how ſuch a doctrine as we are now upon, could be ſafe, if it were not true, we may reaſonably infer that it is true as well as ſafe. Thus far I have been purſuing the conſequences which appear to follow from the conceſſion made by Daillé and others.

But I apprehend withal, that the ſame concluſion will more directly and cloſely follow from the principles before laid down; namely, that morally ſpeaking, it is abſurd to ſuppoſe that the primitive churches ſhould ſo univerſally maintain one and the ſame doctrine, if they had not received it from the beginning; eſpecially conſidering the important nature of the doctrine, and how near they lived to the apoſtolical age, and how remarkably they were bleſſed, all the time, with plentiful effuſions of God's holy Spirit. Theſe conſiderations taken together, do afford, as I conceive, a poſitive argument to prove that what the ancients ſo held as true and important (ſcripture alſo, in its eaſy and moſt natural ſenſe, countenancing the ſame) ought to

[k] Hic vero ex conceſſis Dallæanis recte concluditur, et nullum articulum neceſſarium eos ignoraſſe; et e fortiore nullâ execrabili hæreſi implicitos, nobis errandi duces extitiſſe—— Minime eſt probabile (judice ipſo Dallæo) vel unicum fidei membrum eos latuiſſe, et multo incredibilius, prolapſos fuiſſe in errorem pernicioſum, ſeu hæreſim ſanæ fidei contrariam Scrivener. contra Dal. p. 222, 223.

to be received by us as ſcripture doctrine[l], and valued accordingly. Any other pretended ſenſe of ſcripture, as implying a kind of moral abſurdity, ought to be rejected; unleſs it can be proved to carry ſuch a degree of moral certainty as is more than ſufficient to countervail ſuch preſcription or prejudice againſt it. But now as to the arian or ſocinian interpretations, in this caſe, they carry no moral certainty at all, to counterpoiſe the moral abſurdity which ſtands againſt them: therefore the judgment of the univerſal church (were there nothing elſe) ought to overrule their interpretations. For it was morally impoſſible that the primitive churches ſhould err, in doctrines of that high importance, ſo ſoon, or ſo univerſally[m]. But it is not morally impoſſible, nor at all unlikely, that thoſe later gentlemen ſhould miſtake in commenting upon ſacred writ.

The

[l] Cum majorem omnibus quam ſingulis chriſtianis, et univerſæ quam particularibus quibuſcunque eccleſiis fidem habendam eſſe nemo dubitet; cum plurima etiam ſint in quæ univerſalis eccleſia per multa poſt apoſtolos ſecula conſenſit; cum hæc denique univerſalis eccleſiæ conſenſio certiſſima ſit, in iis quibus habeatur capitibus, ſacræ ſcripturæ interpretatio; hinc clariſſime conſtat, quali quantoque uſui ſint antiqui patres, aliique omnium eccleſiæ ſeculorum ſcriptores, quamque neceſſario ab iis conſulendi ſint, quibus eccleſiaſticas agitantibus controverſias vel ſua ſalus, vel pax eccleſiæ cordi eſt. — Quicquid de aliis dicendum eſt, ea ſaltem in quæ omnes ubique eccleſiæ conſenſerunt, non poſſunt non certiſſima eſſe, et neceſſario ab omnibus etiamnum retinenda. Beverig. Cod. Can. vindicat. in procem. ſ. iii.

[m] Conſtat proinde omnem doctrinam quæ cum illis eccleſiis apoſtolicis, matricibus et originalibus fidei conſpiret, veritati deputandam, ſine dubio tenentem quod eccleſiæ ab apoſtolis, apoſtoli a Chriſto, Chriſtus a Deo accepit. Tertul. Præſcrip. C. 21.

The ſum then of the whole caſe, in few words, is this. 1. We aſſert, that the received doctrine of the Trinity is proved directly to be true, and conſequently to be important, from ſcripture itſelf, according to the known rules of grammar and criticiſm: and ſuch proof cannot be evaded, or eluded, without doing the greateſt violence imaginable to the texts. 2. In the next place, we maintain, that the ancient churches taught the ſame doctrine as an eſſential, and condemned the contrary opinion as pernicious and dangerous: which conſideration makes it now doubly abſurd to interpret ſcripture in contradiction to that doctrine[n]. 3. The reſult of the two foregoing conſiderations, is, that ſince we have thus proved the truth of our doctrine, and the importance of it, both ways (directly from ſcripture, and indirectly from the ancients) I ſay, the reſult is, that this is the faith which we ought to contend for.

[n] "The unanimous conſent of ſo many diſtinct viſible "churches, as exhibited their ſeveral confeſſions, catechiſms, or "teſtimonies of their own or forefathers faith unto the coun-"cil of Nice, was an argument of the ſame force and efficacy "againſt Arius and his partakers, as the general conſent and "practice of all nations, in worſhipping a divine power in "all ages, is againſt atheiſts. Nothing but the ingrafted no-"tion of a Deity could have induced ſo many ſeveral notions, "ſo much different in natural diſpoſitions, in civil diſcipline "and education, to affect or practiſe the duty of adoration; "and nothing but the ingrafted word (as St. James calls the "goſpel) delivered by Chriſt and his apoſtles in the holy "ſcriptures, could have kept ſo many ſeveral churches as "communicated their confeſſions unto that council, in the "unity of the ſame faith." Biſhop Patrick, Diſcourſe about Tradition, p. 21. printed A. D. 1683.

for. We are morally certain every way, that it is true, and if true, important of courſe. And ſince we have ſuch moral certainty as things of this nature can be conceived to admit of, and ſuch as God has obliged us to ſubmit to and follow in other like caſes, it is therefore infallibly certain (that I may once more copy after the great Chillingworth) that, in true wiſdom and prudence, we ought to accept this doctrine as revealed by God, and to maintain it with a conſcientious care and zeal; and conſequently, to decline communion with all ſuch as openly impugn it.

Here I thought to have concluded this chapter, having offered what appeared ſufficient for ſupporting or illuſtrating the uſe and value of eccleſiaſtical antiquity. But I conſider, that ſome perhaps might think it an omiſſion, if I ſhould take no notice of ſundry objections which have been frequently urged againſt the uſe of antiquity, particularly in controverſies of faith. Now, though I apprehend that a clear and juſt ſtating of the caſe (which is what I have been labouring) is the beſt way of removing objections, as it is leaving them no foundation to ſtand upon, or none conſiderable; yet rather than be thought wanting in any reſpect to a very important ſubject, I ſhall endeavour to return particular anſwers to the moſt noted objections which have fallen within my obſervation. The doing it may help to illuſtrate the ſubject; as it is conſidering it under various views, turned and

and tried every way: and ſometimes juſt anſwers to objections have the force almoſt of new proofs, for confirming the poſitions before aſſerted. I incline the more to it, becauſe great pains have been taken by many to depreciate the value of antiquity, and to throw contempt upon the primitive fathers: which is a very unjuſtifiable practice, and is wounding chriſtianity itſelf through their ſides; though ſome that have done it, might be far from intending it. But I proceed to particulars.

I. It has been ſometimes pleaded, that the ſcriptures are in themſelves a perfect rule of faith: what need therefore can there be of fathers, with reſpect to the fundamental articles[o]? To which we anſwer, that we produce not fathers to ſuperadd new doctrines to ſcripture, but only to ſecure the old; not to complete the rule, but more ſtrongly to aſſert and maintain both its true ſenſe, and whole ſenſe. The more perfect the rule is, the more care and circumſpection it demands, that we may preſerve it intire, both as to words, and meaning. For if either of them happens to be ſtolen away, or wreſted from us, ſcripture ſo maimed or caſtrated is no longer that perfect rule which Chriſt has ordained. It is much to be ſuſpected, that many pretend a zeal for ſcripture, who mean nothing by it, but to have its fences taken down,

[o] Whitby, Diſſertat. de Scriptur. Interpret. in Præfat. p. 8, 9.

down, that they may deal the more freely, or rudely with it. They would exclude the ancients, to make room for themſelves, and throw a kind of ſlight upon the received interpretations, only to advance their own. Such commonly has been the way, and therefore there is the leſs regard to be paid to magnificent words. They complain ſometimes, that interpreting ſcripture by the ancients, is debaſing its majeſty, and throwing Chriſt out of his throne[p]. But we think, that Chriſt never ſits more ſecure or eaſy in his throne, than when he has his moſt faithful guards about him; and that none are ſo likely to ſtrike at his authority, or to aim at dethroning him, as they that would diſplace his old ſervants, only to make way for new ones; who may either obtrude themſelves without call, or may be unfurniſhed for the employ, or not well affected to his perſon and government. But to ſpeak out of figure, and to come cloſer to the buſineſs, the perfection of ſcripture is a point allowed, and is no part of the queſtion between us: the main queſtion is, how we may be moſt ſecure of reaping the full benefits of that perfection, whether with the light of antiquity before us, or without it? We know, how Fauſtus Socinus, under colour of extolling the perfection of ſcripture, ſtudied nothing ſo much as to blazon the perfection of his own parts, and abilities, deſerting the ancients, and

[p] Whitby, ibid. p. 9.

and truſting only to himſelf and his uncle Lælius[q]. He preſumed to ſet up his own fond conceits, as the meaſure of all truth: which, in effect, was advancing a new rule of faith, and forcing ſcripture to a compliance with it; preferring the rovings of his own imagination before the wiſdom of heaven. It might be ſhewn on the other hand, that thoſe who have leaſt indulged their own fancies, but have adhered ſtrictly to antiquity, in the prime things, have done moſt honour to the perfection of ſcripture, and have kept the rule of faith intire. This therefore is the way, rather than the other.

I may add, that when we ſay that ſcripture is perfect, we mean, generally, as to the matter of it, which is full and complete to be a rule of life and manners, without taking in any additional rule to join with it. But if we ſpeak of ſcripture being perfect in regard to words, or ſtyle, we can mean only, that it is as perfect as words can be, and words (to us now) of a dead language. Whatever imperfection neceſſarily goes along with all languages, muſt of courſe go along with ſcripture language; which though dictated from

[q] Neminem enim ego in iis rebus de quibus in reſponſione illâ meâ diſſeritur, ex iis qui hodie vivunt, ullâ ex parte magiſtrum agnoſco; ſed Deum tantummodo præceptorem habui ſacraſque literas. Quinetiam in univerſâ ipsâ divinarum rerum ſcientiâ, quæcunque tandem illa in me ſit, præter unum Lælium, patruum meum, qui jam diu mortuus eſt, vel potius præter quædam paucula ab ipſo conſcripta, et multa annotata, nullum prorſus magiſtrum me habere contigit. Socin. Ep. ad Squarcialupum, app. Tom. i. p. 362.

from heaven, or conducted by the Spirit of God, is yet adapted to the manner of men, and muſt take its conſtruction from the common rules of interpretation agreed upon among men. Now, if the fathers, as living nearer the fountain, had ſome opportunities which we want, and might know ſome things much better than we at this diſtance can pretend to do, why ſhould we neglect or deſpiſe any light or help which they can give for our direction, in ſettling the ſenſe of ſcripture? In human laws, as I have hinted above, it has been always thought a good rule of interpretation (not excluding any other good rule) to obſerve, upon what occaſion the laws were made, what was their general ſcope or view, and how they were underſtood at their firſt framing, or immediately after, and to recollect how the practice ran. Hence it is, that reports, and precedents, and adjudged caſes are ſo highly uſeful in intrepreting human laws. The caſe is not much different in divine laws, being that they alſo are written in human language, and their ſenſe is to be inveſtigated, and cleared up by the like human means. If the fathers were fallible, ſo alſo are we: and if they, with all their advantages, might miſconſtrue ſcripture, ſo may we much more. Therefore there is no prudence in throwing off their aſſiſtance as uſeleſs, or ſuperfluous. Even fallible men may be uſeful inſtructors to others as fallible. And in a multitude of counſellors,

counſellors, eſpecially ſuch counſellors, there is ſafety[r].

II. But it is farther pleaded, that ſcripture is plain in all neceſſaries, and therefore needs no illuſtration from the ancients[s]. We allow, that ſcripture is plain in neceſſaries; yea, it is what we urge and contend for: and there is nothing which offends us more, than that many perſons will endeavour notwithſtanding, by violent contorſions, far fetched ſubtleties, and ſtudied evaſions, to elude and fruſtrate theſe plain things. Such conduct on the adverſe ſide, makes it the more neceſſary to have recourſe to antiquity, for the greater ſecurity againſt all ſuch attempts. For while ſcripture is plain, antiquity is plain alſo; and two plain things are better than one. God himſelf hath taught us, by adding his oath to his promiſe, not to think any confirmation ſuperfluous, which he is pleaſed to afford us. His word alone might be ſafely depended upon, being certain and infallible. But two immutable things afford the ſtronger conſolation[t]; and God conſiders the infirmities of mankind. In like manner, though ſcripture be very plain to reaſonable men, ſo far as concerns neceſſaries, yet by taking in antiquity to it, the evidence, upon the whole, becomes both plainer[u], and ſtronger. There is ſo much weakneſs commonly

[r] Prov. xi. 14. [s] Whitby, Diſſertat. in Præf. p. 10, 19.
[t] Hebr. vi. 17, 18.
[u] N. B. It ſhould be obſerved that the word plain is an equivocal word, and of indeterminate meaning, till it be carefully diſtinguiſhed. It is a relative, and means plain to ſome or other,

monly in human nature, and ſo much reluctance ſhewn to the reception of divine truths, that we have need of all the plain things we can any where procure: and had we twenty more as plain as theſe, we could make uſe of them all, and indeed ſhould be obliged to do ſo, leſt otherwiſe we ſhould be found guilty of deſpiſing the bleſſings of heaven. It is certain, that there is ſomething very particular in the concerns of religion, that plain things there, have not the ſame force or weight as they have any where elſe. It is the only ſubject in the world, wherein a man

other. To God all things are plain; to angels more things than to man. Doctrines plain to ſome men are not ſo to others, on account of ignorance, inattention, prejudice, or any infirmity, natural, or contracted. Things alſo may be plain by the help of means, which are not ſo without the uſe of ſuch means. Moreover, there are degrees of plainneſs, for it conſiſts not in a point, but admits of a latitude. Beſides, the plaineſt things in the world taken in a right point of view, may ceaſe to be plain, when put into a wrong one; when induſtriouſly obſcured, embroiled, and intangled, by ſnares and fallacies, by involving many things in one (which ſhould be kept ſeparate) or by expreſſing them in ambiguous, equivocal terms, or by perplexing them with captious and ſophiſtical queſtions. There are degrees alſo of attention, upon which the degrees of plainneſs do very much depend: and attention depends upon the will, and the will is variouſly influenced by motives, external or internal.

But though plainneſs be really a relative, and often varies according to the perſon, and his degree of attention, capacity, inclination, &c. yet we have formed ſome kind of idea of an abſolute plainneſs, abſtracted from particular perſons; and we mean by it, as to the point now in hand, ſuch a plainneſs in the thing itſelf, or in the words expreſſing it, as any one of tolerable capacity, with a reaſonable attention, and by the uſe of the ordinary helps, or means, may competently underſtand. In this ſenſe, or by this ſtandard, fundamentals are commonly ſaid to be plain.

man may diſpute the moſt certain facts, and moſt indubitable proofs, and yet be allowed to be in his ſenſes. For if any one, in the common affairs of life, were to make it a rule to believe nothing but what he ſees, or were to reject the faith of all hiſtory, he would undoubtedly be deſpiſed or pitied by every body, as not well in his wits. Seeing then that the caſe of religion is ſo widely different from all others, and that the plaineſt evidences there often loſe their effect, we can never be too ſolicitous in accumulating evidence upon evidence, and teſtimony upon teſtimony, to do the moſt we can towards relieving the weakneſs, or conquering the reluctance of men ſlow to believe. And when we have done the beſt we can, and have purſued every reaſonable method we could think of, we are yet to look upon it as ſufficient, only becauſe we can do no more. Wherefore, no plainneſs of ſcripture can ever be juſtly thought to ſuperſede the uſe of antiquity; unleſs it could be ſuppoſed, that no additional light, or ſtrength can be borrowed from it: which is too extravagant a ſuppoſition to need any confutation; beſides that I have already obviated every ſuggeſtion of that kind, in the former part of this chapter.

If it be ſaid, that common chriſtians, at leaſt, can reap no benefit from antiquity, nor make any uſe of it; that will not be a reaſon ſufficient for throwing it aſide, ſo long as the learned may. But even common chriſtians do enjoy the benefit of it, if not at firſt hand, yet at the ſecond, third,

or fourth; and that ſuffices here, as well as in other caſes of as weighty concernment. How do they know, for inſtance, that ſcripture is the word of God? They know it immediately or proximately from their proper guides, or other inſtructors; who in the laſt reſort, learn it from the ancients. So then, ordinary chriſtians may thus remotely have the uſe of antiquity (not to mention other nearer ways[a]) with reſpect to the ſenſe of ſcripture, as well as with regard to its authenticity: and their faith may be both ſtrengthened, and brightened by this additional reinforcement. "The people are to underſtand "the grounds of their faith, and to judge, by "the beſt helps they can, what doctrine is "agreeable to ſcripture. But among thoſe helps, "we take in, not barely the aſſiſtance of their "own guide, but the evidence he brings, as to "the ſenſe of the teaching church, in the beſt "and pureſt ages[b]." But to return.

We admit, as I before ſaid, that ſcripture is very plain in neceſſaries. As, for inſtance, nothing can be plainer from ſcripture, than that Chriſt is God, and *over all God bleſſed for ever*, *true God*, *great God*, *Jehovah*, and the like; and that divine attributes, and divine works are aſcribed to him, and divine worſhip alſo, to make every thing clear, and to cut off all reaſonable handle for diſpute[c]. But notwithſtanding

[a] See this matter conſidered more at large, in Biſhop Hare's Scripture vindicated, p. 111, &c.

[b] Stillingfleet's Anſwer to J. S.'s Catholic Letters, p. 58.

[c] See my Sermons, p. 276, 277.

ing that all theſe things are ſo plain, yet conſidering that we are not the firſt men that ever looked into ſcripture, but that others, who had as good eyes as we and as upright hearts, and a competent meaſure of common ſenſe (beſides ſome peculiar advantages beyond what we can pretend to) have peruſed the ſame ſcripture, before us; I ſay conſidering theſe things, it would be ſomething of a mortification to us, or would appear ſomewhat ſtrange, if ſuch perſons ſhould not have found the ſame doctrine then, which we have the pleaſure to find now. For whatever is really plain to moderns, and neceſſary, muſt, one would think, by parity of reaſon, or for a ſtronger reaſon, have been plain to the ancients alſo, and neceſſary to them as well as to us. Accordingly, upon examining, we find, that the ſame doctrine was plain to them, even ſo far as to be looked upon as an eſſential: a conſideration which adds the more ſtrength to what we had before proved from ſcripture, as the want of ſuch concurring ſuffrage would have been a perplexing difficulty; I mean, while we have ſuch ancient monuments to look into, and to compare. Indeed, if they were all loſt, burnt, or otherwiſe extinguiſhed, our ſcripture proof (ſuppoſing ſcripture itſelf to want no proof) would ſtand firm without them. But when we have the ancients to compare with ſcripture, and know that, in the very nature of the thing, they ought to tally with each other; the ancients

now, of conſequence, muſt be either a very ſtrong confirmation as to any doctrines held for articles of faith, or as ſtrong an objection. They are conſiderable diſadvantages where they run counter, and as conſiderable advantages where they favour.

III. It is ſometimes pleaded, that ſcripture is its own beſt interpreter, by comparing texts with texts, and therefore there is no need of fathers in the caſe; for in the beſt we have all [c].

In reply to which, we are very ready to allow, that comparing ſcripture with ſcripture is a very good method of interpretation, yea and the beſt and moſt ſatisfactory of any, to every rational mind. But ſtill we do not ſee reaſon why it ſhould be thought to ſuperſede any other that is good. For, after we have thereby obtained all the home light we can get, where will be the harm of admitting ſtill further light, if we can procure it, from abroad? The more we have of both kinds, the better: every additional increaſe or improvement, though it were but ſmall in compariſon, yet has its uſe, either for confirming the weak and wavering, or for comforting them who are ſtrong in faith, or for confuting and confounding novelliſts; but moſt of all for reclaiming thoſe who are over apt to be led by authority, and great names, perhaps of mere moderns. For certainly,

[c] Whitby, Differt. Præf. p. 12.

certainly, if authority, or great names, or even numbers are of any weight; ancients are preferable to moderns, conſidered as ſuch, fathers and councils to private dogmatizers, and the chriſtian world to a few gainſayers. Such being the manifeſt and conſtant uſe of the argument drawn from antiquity, ſuperadded to ſcripture, there is great reaſon for taking it in after ſcripture, that we may have the benefit of both.

The excellent Buddeus, otherwiſe a very judicious writer, appears not ſo clear, or not ſo accurate in his account of this matter, as might be wiſhed. He gives his judgment, "That neither natural reaſon, nor tradition ſhould be the "rule of interpreting, but ſcripture itſelf, and "the analogy of faith[d]." Had he ſaid, neither one nor other, but all together, I think, he had ſaid right. But as he has taken in only two of the things, excluding the reſt, as it ſeems, from bearing a part in the interpretation of ſcripture, he appears to me to have judged wrong upon the caſe, or at leaſt to have fallen ſhort of his wonted accuracy. For, certainly, he ought to have allowed ſomething to natural reaſon, and

[d] A ſocinianis, non minus quam romanenſibus diſcedimus, dum nec rationem, nec traditiones (aut eccleſiæ auctoritatem) pro regulâ et normâ interpretandi ſcripturam agnoſcimus, ſed ſcripturam ex ſcripturâ ſecundum analogiam fidei explicandam contendimus: quam quidem viam et rectiſſimam et tutiſſimam eſſe, res ipſa oſtendit, et facile perſpiciat qui cuncta rite ſecum ponderavit. Buddei Iſagog. Vol. ii. p. 1793. Conf. ejuſdem Præfat. ad Salom. Glaſſii opera. Edit. Lipſ. A. D. 1725.

and ſomething alſo to antiquity, though not every thing. There is a great deal of difference between admitting either of them to govern abſolutely, and throwing them quite out: and there is a juſt medium between giving each of them a negative, and making either of them ſole umpire. There are many conſiderations to be taken in, for the proceeding rightly in the interpretation of ſcripture; and all of them reſpectively muſt have their ſhare, as they have their weight. To exemplify what I mean; true interpretation of ſcripture cannot, in any caſe whatever, run counter to any plain certain principle of natural reaſon (in as much as truth can never be contrary to truth) nor, in any caſe whatever, to ſcripture itſelf rightly interpreted; nor, in any caſe whatever, to the analogy of faith before proved (which amounts, nearly to the ſame with the preceding) nor without the utmoſt neceſſity, to the natural, uſual, unforced ſenſe of the words; nor, ſo far as concerns fundamentals, to the univerſal judgment of the firſt and pureſt ages of the church. Theſe, as I conceive, are the butts and boundaries within which every true interpretation is confined. And whenever any pretended interpretation is found to break through them, or through any of them, there needs no more, to pronounce it falſe. To expreſs the ſame thing affirmatively, which before I have negatively, when any interpretation of ſcripture has all thoſe five characters, (viz. natural reaſon, parallel

parallel places of ſcripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and countenance of antiquity) to vouch directly for it, then it is as ſtrongly ſupported as it is poſſible for an interpretation to be. If it has only ſome of thoſe poſitive characters, or one only, the reſt not interfering, it may be a good interpretation; but the more it has, ſo much the ſurer[e]. For example:

[e] Dr. Rogers, in one of his Sermons (poſth. Serm. iv. p. 95, &c.) explains the whole matter ſomewhat differently, but agreeing, in the main, with what I have here offered. His thoughts upon the point are comprized in the particulars here following, which I ſhall produce in his own words, as nearly as an abridgment will permit.

" 1. Many places of ſacred writ are ſo plain, that no man, " who reads or hears them, in a language he is acquainted with, " can doubt of their meaning.

" 2. The ſenſe of other places we collect from rational de- " ductions, comparing one ſcripture with another.

" 3. Other places there are which require the knowledge of " hiſtory of ancient facts and cuſtoms, of early tradition, and " primitive acceptation, to determine their ſenſe.

" 4. The inſpiration of the ſcriptures ſuppoſed, we cannot " conſiſtently with ſuch ſuppoſition, either from the conſtruc- " tion of the words, or from deductions of reaſon, or from " authority, admit any propoſition as the intended ſenſe of " ſcripture, which contradicts any manifeſt truth.

" 5. Neither can we admit contradictory expoſitions of the " ſame or different places of ſcripture.

" In the two laſt caſes, we conclude negatively with the " cleareſt aſſurance: but when we go on to aſcertain the mean- " ing poſitively, the ſenſe of ſcripture which we receive in the " firſt way, by an immediate view, appears to us with greateſt " evidence: and the ſenſe we collect in the ſecond way, by " rational deductions, is more evident than what we receive in " the third way, from the affirmations of authority."

So, this excellent writer reſolves the poſitive characters of true and juſt interpretation, into immediate view, rational deductions, and authority all having their proper weight of evi-

example: the doctrine I am here defending, has four of the ſaid characters poſitively for it, (viz. tenor of ſcripture, analogy of faith, propriety of language, and antiquity) and the fifth, which is natural reaſon, is not againſt it: therefore it is a very juſt and reaſonable interpretation. So many plain legible characters of truth ought, in all equity, to overrule any ſeeming, or conjectural repugnancies as to the nature of the thing confeſſedly myſterious, ſo long as there is no plain contrariety to any known truth.

Hitherto I have been anſwering thoſe objections which aim at ſetting the fathers aſide as needleſs, being ſuperſeded (as is thought) by the perfection or plainneſs, or fulneſs of ſacred writ. The remaining objections, which I am to take notice of, are of another kind, ſtriking more directly at the reputation of the fathers, in order to inſinuate, that they are by no means qualified to ſerve the purpoſes they are brought for, being more likely to perplex than to inſtruct a reader, more apt to miſlead and draw us aſide, than to ſet us right.

IV. The obſcurity of the fathers makes up one half of the learned Daillé's treatiſe upon that

dence reſpectively, but in different degrees. The two negative characters are checks upon all the poſitive ones, to aſcertain their application, and to prevent the puſhing any of them too far. This account, in ſubſtance, differs ſo little from what I have offered, that it appears to contain much the ſame thoughts placed in another light, or differently ranged. It may be of uſe to a reader to take the ſame thing in two views, and ſo to form his own judgment, as he ſees beſt, out of both: and therefore I have here preſented him with both.

that ſubject. I need not be very particular in examining into that plea here, becauſe it will come up again, in part, under another article lower down, where I ſhall conſider it more diſtinctly. For the preſent, it may ſuffice to obſerve: 1. That Mr. Daillé, in ſome inſtances, rhetoricates upon the ſubject, and has frequently overſtrained. 2. Many things have been cleared up ſince he wrote that piece; (ſince the year 1631) ſome by himſelf, more by others after him: ſo that what might appear to be of ſome force then, can have little or none now. 3. Particular anſwers have been returned to the ſeveral articles on the head of obſcurity, by thoſe who have profeſſedly undertaken it[f], beſides what has been done occaſionally in new editions of fathers, or in bibliotheques, or in critical diſſertations. 4. Whatever truth there may be in the objection, as to ſundry controverted points of inferior moment, yet it affects not the cauſe now before us. For Daillé himſelf allows, that the fathers are generally clear enough in points fundamental, whereof this is one, in his judgment at leaſt. He writes thus: "You ſhall there meet with "very ſtrong and ſolid proofs of thoſe fun-"damental principles of our religion, touching "which

[f] Scrivener. adv. Dallæum. Par. I. per tot.
Reeves's Preface to the Apologiſts, p. 37, &c.
Natalis Alexander, Hiſt. Eccl. Sæc. ii. Diſſ. xvi. C. 22. p. 537, &c.
Beverege's Cod. Can. vindicat. Proœm. Sect. viii.

" which we are all agreed; and alſo many ex-
" cellent things laid open, tending to the right
" underſtanding of thoſe myſteries, and alſo
" of the ſcriptures wherein they are contained.
" In this particular, their authority may be of
" good uſe to you, and may ſerve as a pro-
" bable argument of the truth[g]." So then, whatever obſcurity may otherwiſe be found in the fathers (like as in ſcripture itſelf) the cauſe which we have now in hand, appears to be but little concerned in it, according to the judgment of that learned man, who made the moſt of the objection, as to other matters. For, though he ſometimes points out obſcure paſſages, as he conceived them to be, relating to things fundamental, yet, upon the whole, he apprehended, that thoſe doctrines might be plainly enough traced up to the very days of the apoſtles, and that the fathers might be exceeding uſeful to us in that view, and for that purpoſe.

V. It has been frequently objected, that many of the fathers have erred, and ſometimes groſsly: and large collections of their real and ſuppoſed miſtakes, have been drawn out, and preſented to public view[h]. Now, indeed, if any man ſhould preſume to ſay, that

[g] Daillé of the right uſe of the fathers, Part II. p. 184.
Si in vivis jam eſſet [Dallæus] quam ægrè ferret vir pientiſſimus, ſi aliqui reperirentur qui argumentis, quibus ipſe cauſam pontificiam adeo feliciter debellavit, ad labefactandam et ſubvertendam Nicænam fidem abuterentur. Cave, Ep. Apologet. p. 19.

[h] Daillé, Part II. C. 4. p. 60, &c.
Whitby, Diſſertat. in Præfat. ſ. iv. p. 15, &c.

that the fathers were inſpired, or infallible in what they wrote, ſuch a collection of errors might be of uſe for the confuting the falſe preſumption. But how it affects their credit or character as witneſſes of the church's prime doctrines, in their times, appears not. It is not uncommon for thoſe very fathers, where they give a wrong and falſe opinion, to make a true diſcovery of the church's ſentiments, in that very inſtance, contrary to their own. Therefore a reader ſhould know how to diſtinguiſh between delivering an opinion, and reporting a fact; as alſo, between appealing to the fathers as unerring judges, and appealing to them as faithful witneſſes.

But to ſpeak more directly to the charge of errors, it may be juſtly pleaded in abatement, that upon a careful review, many of them have been found to be purely imaginary, mere miſtakes, or miſrepreſentations of the too precipitate correctors: and of thoſe that are real, moſt will be ſeen in things only of a problematical kind, and of a ſlight nature[i]. Or if they be of a more grievous ſort, they were the miſtakes of ſome few, and were either not univerſal[k], or not ancient, and

[i] Monebo tantum, in patrum ſcriptis dogmata philoſophica a fidei articulis probe eſſe diſtinguenda. In his, ſacris literis et catholicæ traditioni ſtrictius ſe alligant, et in re ſummâ omnes conveniunt: in illis, majori utuntur libertate, et opiniones ſæpius adhibent quæ in philoſophorum ſcholis ventilari ſolebant; quin et in explicandis fidei myſteriis quandoque voces e ſcholâ philoſophicâ petitas admovent, ſed ad chriſtianum ſenſum accommodatas. Cave, Epiſt. Apologet. p. 48.

[k] See Grotius de Jur. B. et P. L. i. C. 2. ſ. 9. p. 60.

and never inſiſted upon as articles of faith, and terms of communion. So that whatever errors are diſcovered in any father or fathers, they do not invalidate the argument drawn from the univerſal agreement of the ancient churches in the prime things. However, there have not been wanting, upon occaſion, learned hands[l] to draw up apologies for the fathers either in ſeparate diſcourſes, or in prefaces to new editions, or by way of note, or the like; by which means moſt of thoſe unworthy aſperſions have been happily removed, and the black catalogues much reduced. A learned foreigner[m], not long ago, being juſtly ſenſible of the miſchievous tendency of that unnatural practice of ſome chriſtians, in throwing contempt upon the brighteſt ornaments of the chriſtian church, took the pains to conſider the particular articles of doctrine upon which the fathers have been wrongfully ſuſpected, or charged, and to do them juſtice againſt their indiſcreet, or over cenſorious accuſers.

Since that time, I do not know a warmer or keener adverſary that the fathers have had, than

[l] Thorndicius de Rat. et Jur. Fin. controv. C. 25. Scrivener. adv. Dall. Par. II. C. iv. p. 185. Cavii Epiſtola Apologetica. Reeve's Preface, p. 67, &. Remarks on Chriſtianity as old, &c. with regard to primitive Antiquity, Part I. continued, printed for Crownfield, 1733.

[m] Zornius Hamburgenſis. Vindiciæ patrum per omnes fidei chriſtianæ articulos, oppoſitæ Joanni Dallæo: una cum ſelectis obſervationibus contra recentiores patrum cenſores, Anglos, Belgas, Gallos. Inter Opuſcul. Sac. Tom. i. A. D. 1709. Gieſſæ Haſſorum, p. 659. Edit. Nup. A. D. 1731.

than Monſ. Barbeyrac, profeſſor of civil law at Groningen, and known to the learned world by his French tranſlations of Pufendorf and Grotius, and his learned notes upon both. He attacks the fathers principally upon the head of morality, (as his ſubject led him to do) and ſeems to exert his utmoſt endeavours to ſink their reputation for ſenſe, and conduct, and even for conſcience too, in ſome meaſure, in order to ſtrike them out of all credit or authority[n]. His work has twice appeared in Engliſh, as well as in French) and may therefore deſerve ſome notice in this place, as much as I may have room for, not to make too long an excurſion

That ſatyr upon the fathers (for it deſerves no better name) had not long been abroad, before Mr. Ceillier, a learned Roman catholic, drew up a formal anſwer to it, of which I have ſeen little more than the title[o], and a few extracts. Afterwards, the learned Buddeus animadverted pretty largely upon him, detecting ſome of his miſtakes, but with great tenderneſs; moderating, as it were, between Mr. Ceillier and him, in reſpect of ſeveral particulars. [p]Buddeus was himſelf not the moſt zealous admirer of the fathers; and therefore what he ſays in their favour,

[n] Prefatory diſcourſe to his French verſion of Pufendorf; ſince rendered into Engliſh, and prefixed to the Engliſh edition of 1729, ſect. ix, x. p. 18, &c.

[o] Apologie de la Morale des Peres de l'Egliſe contre les injuſtes accuſations du Sieur Jean Barbeyrac, Pariſ. 1718.

[p] Buddeus, Iſagog. Vol. i. p. 620—642.

favour, may be juſtly thought not to exceed in any reſpect, but to fall within compaſs. Some officious gentleman amongſt us, having met with Monſ. Barbeyrac's French treatiſe, publiſhed it ſeparately in our language, prefixing a kind of boyiſh title[q] to it, and recommending it with ſome airs of inſult, ſuch as are frequently incident to little minds. Not long after, an ingenious gentleman printed a reply[r], to rebuke the tranſlator for his rudeneſs, and at the ſame time to defend the fathers againſt the injurious accuſations of the author himſelf: which he has effectually performed, with good learning, and ſolid judgment.

Now, ſeeing that ſo much has been done already, I may content myſelf with a few ſtrictures, or brief reflexions. In juſtice to the fathers, and to primitive chriſtianity ſtruck at through their ſides, it ought to be told, that the learned civilian has not dealt fairly with the public in that article. He has not been careful about the facts upon which he grounds his cenſure, but has often taken them upon truſt from others, tranſcribing their overſights, or partial accounts. Indeed, he makes a kind of apology for his taking ſo much at ſecond hand: for he ſays, "He deſignedly pitched upon examples which had been already remarked and produced by others, and are extant in books moſt

[q] The Spirit of Eccleſiaſtics of all ſects and ages, &c. 1722.

[r] The Spirit of infidelity detected. By a Believer, 1723.

"moſt common and eaſy to be had[s]." But then he ſhould have enquired whether thoſe examples had not been already replied to, and competently cleared up, and whether, at leaſt, they were not capable of it. And he ſhould have conſidered further, whether the authors whom he copies from, were all perſons to be intirely relied upon in what they ſay, as men of known learning, judgment, candor, and modeſty; not prejudiced againſt the fathers, nor otherwiſe apt to be cenſorious, and over ſevere in diſcovering imaginary faults, or expoſing real ones. Before one determines any thing as to the character of the fathers from ſecond hand reports, it would be proper to inquire whether their accuſers were themſelves men of clear and unexceptionable characters. It is no excuſe to a perſon of learning and abilities, that he ſuffered himſelf to be impoſed upon by others, in a matter which required care, and faithfulneſs.

Beſides his too often deceiving himſelf, or others with falſe facts, even thoſe that are true, in part, or in the main, are yet ſeldom placed in a true light. Every real or ſeeming fault of the ancients is rhetorically aggravated, the hardeſt conſtruction commonly put upon it, and no favourable allowances are brought in to qualify; but after ſaying the unkindeſt things which he had any colour for, and a great deal of art uſed to contrive ſuch colour, he

[s] Prefatory Diſcourſe, ſ. x. p. 33.

he forgets to afford them their due praiſes in any thing, to countenance the obloquy. So that were a reader to form his idea of the fathers, only by what he finds in that repreſentation, he would go near to make it the very reverſe of their true and juſt character. I cannot here take upon me to criticize the whole work; that has been done already by abler hands. But I ſhall mention a few particulars, to give the readers a taſte of his way and manner, whereby they may competently judge of the reſt.

The author falls firſt upon Athenagoras, and charges him with ſeeming to eſtabliſh the worſhip of angels[t]. But this is a falſe report. Athenagoras neither ſays it, nor ſeems to ſay it. Indeed Dupin, whether to favour the Romiſh cauſe, or whether by mere forgetfulneſs or overſight, had ſaid the ſame thing. But Monſ. Barbeyrac underſtands the nature of evidence too well to apprehend, that the retailing a miſreport can amount to a proof. He has another complaint againſt the ſame Athenagoras for diſallowing ſecond marriages. The fact is true in ſome ſenſe or other; but what ſecond marriages, is the queſtion. Might not Athenagoras mean, marrying again after wrongful divorce? A very learned man[u] has pleaded much, and well, for that conſtruction: and it is favoured by Athenagoras's[w] grounding his

[t] Prefatory diſcourſe, ſ. ix. p. 18.

[u] Suicer. Theſaur. in voce δίγαμος, p. 895. Zorn. Opuſc. Tom. i. 613.

[w] Athenag. Legat. p. 130.

his doctrine upon our Lord's own words[w] relating to ſuch ſecond marriages.

And though he ſpeaks againſt the marriage as not good after the death of the wife, yet he may be underſtood only of ſuch wife, wrongfully divorced before. For he thought, that the adultery before incurred, by marrying in her life time, did not ceaſe by her death. The marriage contracted in adultery, like an error in the firſt concoction, could never be fully corrected, but would ſtill retain its primitive impurity, as having been null, and wrong from the firſt. If his words may admit that ſenſe, it is ſufficient. For an accuſer is bound to make good his allegation, and the old rule is, *in dubiis benigniora ſemper præferenda.* I may add, that Athenagoras has been always reputed a man of the church. And yet it is certain that the doctrine here charged upon him, was condemned by the church in the montaniſts, and novatians. Which is a further preſumption in his favour, and ſeems to juſtify the mild and candid conſtruction of the words in queſtion.

The next man Mr. B. falls upon, is Clemens of Alexandria, whom he uſes more unkindly than he had before uſed Athenagoras. He charges him with three ſpecial faults[x]. 1. With teaching ſtoical paradoxes, for chriſtian doctrine. 2. With maintaining that "Chriſt and "his apoſtles had not any paſſions at all." 3. With juſtifying

[w] Mark x. 11. Matt. xix. 9. Luke xvi. 18.
[x] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 19.

juſtifying the idolatry of the pagans. The firſt article appears captious and frivolous. For what if Clemens, whether the better to reconcile the ſtoics to chriſtianity, or whether to turn their own artillery upon them, made uſe of their language and phraſeology, to recommend true and ſound chriſtian principles by[y]; where was the harm? Or what was there in it, which might not well become ſo wiſe and ſo good a man? Let Mr. B. put himſelf in Clemens's place, and then conſider, whether he could do any thing better or more commendable in thoſe circumſtances.

The ſecond article is founded in nothing but miſconſtruction, and was cleared up long ago by the learned Dr. Cave[z], and by others[a] after him: not to mention what the benedictines had ſaid more largely, in defence of Hilary againſt the ſame accuſation[b].

The third article is intirely without grounds; a concluſion drawn without premiſes to ſupport it[c], a falſe inference charged upon very innocent words, in contradiction to the whole tenor of Clemens's writings. Is this dealing fairly with the ancients, or with the public?

Beſides

[y] See Spirit of Infidelity detected, p. 31.
[z] Cave, Epiſt. Apolog. p. 50, &c.
[a] Natal. Alexand. E. H. ſ. ii. Diſſert. 8. p. 395.
Nourii Apparat. ad Biblioth. max. Vol. i. p. 968.
[b] Præfat. General. ſ. iii. p. 30, &c.
[c] Vid. Buddei Iſagog. p. 623.
Spirit of Infidelity detected, p. 33.

Beſides theſe particular charges upon Clemens, he has ſome others more general, which are either injurious, or frivolous. He blames him for want of method and coherence, for being full of declamation and myſtical alluſion, and the like[d]. Which kind of diſcourſe is itſelf declamatory, and detracting, not becoming a perſon of candor, or gravity, who would make allowances for circumſtances, and times, and weigh things in an equal balance. Why muſt every author walk in trammels, and be confined to rules of art? Immethodical collections are uſeful in their kind, and ought to have their proper commendation. But it is further ſaid, as from Le Clerc, that "Clemens's "pædagogue abounds with maxims exceſſively "rigid, and far remote from any thing in prac-"tice." We might except to Le Clerc, as to a perſon of uncommon delicacy, known to lean generally to the ſevere ſide, and none of the beſt natured or moſt happy in his cenſures[e], but prejudiced, by his principles, againſt the primitive fathers; jealous of a reputation which, he ſaw, ſtood in his way, and much afraid of their ſuperiority. Perhaps, after all, he miſtakes Clemens's

[d] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 19.

[e] Vid. Perizonius in Ægypt. Origin. præfat. p. 8. Curtius Vindicat. p. 10—23. 185.—191.
Jenkins, Defenſ. Auguſtin. adv. Phereponum. Præf. p. 9.
Reflections on Learning, p. 235, &c.
Continuation of the Anſwer of the Hiſt. of Oracles, Præf. p. 47, &c.
Cave, Epiſt. Apologet. p. 9, 10, 11, 12.
Cum multis aliis.

Clemens's meaning: or if he does not, his cenſure may be more an argument of the preſent degeneracy, than of Clemens's exceſſive rigour or auſterity. I ſhall only add, that before we blame the ancients for too ſtrict a morality (an error, if it be one, on the right hand) we ought to be well apprized of the circumſtances of thoſe times. For, diverſity of circumſtances requires a diverſity in the application of the ſame general rules, and preſcribes as different a conduct.

I ſhall not go on to the other fathers whom this worthy gentleman has animadverted upon. I have given enough for a ſample, in the two firſt. But I ſhall proceed to obſerve ſomething with reſpect to his general manner of carrying on the impeachment. After he has done with the particulars, charged upon the fathers man by man, he pretends to have demonſtrated clearly, that the moſt celebrated doctors of the ſix firſt centuries were but bad maſters, and very poor guides in matters of morality. Here we ſee, what it was that he aimed at; though he has demonſtrated nothing, but a ſtrong inclination to detract from true and great worth. There is an artificial confuſedneſs in his throwing ſix centuries together. Three or a little more will be enough for us to inſiſt upon, ſo far as our argument from antiquity is concerned. Every body knows that corruptions came in gradually, more and more every day,

after

after the world, as it were, crept into the church[f]. We make a diſtinction between the elder and the later times. It will not be eaſy to perſuade us, that in thoſe beſt and pureſt ages, when chriſtian practice was in the height of perfection, that the theory of it was ſo very lame and defective, as he is pleaſed to intimate; or that the guides and maſters were ſo exceeding low, or bad, when the ſcholars or diſciples were, for the moſt part, eminently good. If any one doubts of the fact, he may ſatisfy himſelf by looking into the accounts given both by chriſtians and pagans[g]; ſuch as make it evident, that the morals of that time were the admiration and envy of the heathen world then, as they are an excellent pattern[h] for the chriſtian world ſince. The author may

[f] Scribere diſpoſui ab Adventu Salvatoris uſque ad noſtram ætatem, id eſt ab apoſtolis uſque ad noſtram temporis fæcem, quomodo et per quos Chriſti eccleſia nata ſit, et adulta, perſecutionibus creverit, et martyriis coronata ſit. Et poſtquam ad Chriſtianos principes venerit, potentiâ quidem et divitiis major, ſed virtutibus minor facta ſit. Hieronym. vit. Malch. Opp. Vol iv. p. 91.

[g] The teſtimonies are collected into one view, by
Cave in his primitive Chriſtianity.
Bingham, in his Chriſtian Antiquities, B. vi. C. 1.
Fabricius, Salutaris Lux Evangelii, C. x. p. 194, &c.
Baltus's Anſwer to Fontenelle's Hiſt. of Oracles, Vol. ii. p. 97.

[h] Dr. Wotton, in a treatiſe where he intended to extol the moderns, and to adjudge them the preference as often as he could, yet took care to give this teſtimony to ancient chriſtianity:

"It is certain that many of the ableſt of the ancient fathers "were excellent caſuiſts; as indeed every man who has a right "judgment, an honeſt mind, and a thorough acquaintance with "the deſign of our bleſſed Saviour revealed in the goſpel, muſt

may conceive as highly as he pleaſes, of modern morality, but impartial judges will think it no commendation of it to have it ſet at variance with primitive chriſtianity. To differ from that ſtandard, in any thing material, is to come ſhort of it, ſuppoſing circumſtances to be the ſame. Neither is want of artificial method any more an objection againſt the ancients, than againſt ſcripture itſelf, the beſt ethics of any.

But to proceed with our author, he runs off for a while into declamatory invective againſt thoſe who are jealous of the honour of the fathers. He pities them with all his heart, thinking it inhuman to inſult them[i]; but doing it all the time. Then he gravely tells his reader, a formal untruth, that they tacitly ſuppoſe the fathers to have been infallible[k]; as if he had intended only to guard againſt a falſe notion of the infallibility of the fathers[l]. But there is a very wide diſtance between ſuppoſing them infallible, and repreſenting them as bad maſters, very poor guides, &c. This learned gentleman, I preſume, does not pretend to be infallible; and yet he might think himſelf ill uſed, if repreſented as a bad maſter, or

" of neceſſity be. And if at this diſtance many of their de-
" ciſions ſeem over ſevere, there is as great at leaſt (if not
" greater) reaſon to ſuſpect that the complaints now-a-days
" raiſed againſt them, may ariſe from our degeneracy, as from
" their unwarrantable ſtrictneſs." Wotton's Reflections on ancient and modern learning, p. 369.

[i] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 25.

[k] Ibid. p. 25.

[l] Ibid. p. 26.

or a very poor guide. There is a medium between the extremes.

He brings up again, ſoon after, the charge of groſs errors, moſt profound ignorance of what they ought to have known; adding, that moſt of them, more or leſs, were led by paſſion, and that their conduct frequently was neither regular, nor juſtifiable[m]. Well then, ſurely this is ſomething more than barely ſaying, they were fallible men; and one may preſume to contradict ſuch a miſreport of them, without maintaining that they were infallible. How will this learned gentleman be able to prove that the character he has here given is their true general character, ſuch as will ſuit the three firſt centuries? Church hiſtory is flatly contrary, and the chriſtian world hitherto has been uſed to honour them with the title of the beſt and pureſt ages. He refers us twice[n] to ſome tart reflections of Gregory Nazianzen upon ſome of the clergy in his time, about A. D. 381. Perhaps Nazianzen himſelf might be led by reſentment to aggravate in ſome meaſure; for he was a man of ſpirit, had ſome warmth, and might drop too ſevere a cenſure, under a ſenſe of the ill uſage he had met with. But ſuppoſing his cenſure to be ſtrictly juſt, what argument is there in it? The clergy about 381 were guilty of many and great faults, therefore the whole order were as guilty all along, for 280 years together; reckoning

[m] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 26. [n] Ibid. p. 18, 34.

reckoning from the apoſtolic age. I ſee not by what rules of reaſoning, ſuch conſequence can be drawn[o]. Every body knows how miſerably the church had been rent aſunder by parties and factions, from the time that arianiſm broke out; that is, for 60 years backwards, or thereabout: by means whereof, mens paſſions were inflamed, and their tempers ſoured. But how does this affect the elder times, when all the biſhops of the chriſtian church were in the main unanimous, and held amicably together againſt jews, pagans and heretics? Allow that heats and animoſities prevailed much among churchmen, towards the end of the fourth century, and that the ſtate of the church at that time was become very corrupt, according to the accounts given by Nazianzen: but then allow alſo, that ſuch corruptions were of recent date, and that the like had not been ſeen in elder times, before the riſe of Arius, as Nazianzen himſelf teſtifies[p]. And he had a vaſt eſteem of one council, at leaſt, the council of Nice, older than what he ſpeaks of. So then, if Nazianzen is a competent evidence to found the objection upon, let him be ſo alſo on our ſide, to ſupply us

[o] Exemplum profert [Clericus] Concilii C. P. 1. quo Gregorius Nazianzenus factioſis quorundam Artibus vexatus, ſede ſuâ ceſſit potius quam expulſus eſt; unde fervidioris ingenii vir πολυθρύλλητον illud de ſynodis judicium protulit. Sed fac hanc illamve ſynodum iniquè ſe geſſiſſe, et nullam veritatis, nullam innocentiæ rationem habuiſſe: an mox omnes ſunt damnandæ, rejiciendæ, exterminandæ? Cave, Epiſt. Apologet. p. 25.

[p] Nazianz. Orat. xxi. p. 380.

us with a proper anſwer, as far as our cauſe can be concerned in the queſtion.

The author proceeds to conteſt the right which the fathers have been thought to have, to the very modeſt title of propagators of the chriſtian religion. He thinks, it ſhould be given to the apoſtles only[q]. But certainly the fathers ſucceeded to the apoſtles in the great work of propagating chriſtianity, and therefore were as properly, (though not altogether ſo eminently) propagators of it, as the apoſtles themſelves. Yea, they alſo were eminently ſuch during the time that miracles laſted, that is to ſay, for three centuries at leaſt. But he is pleaſed to aſk, a little lower in the ſame page, "Why "muſt the fathers of the three or ſix firſt cen- "turies have been men of true piety and know- "ledge, rather than thoſe of the tenth or ele- "venth?" But why does he inſert, or fix, except it be to blend and confound what ſhould be kept diſtinct, and to put a fallacy upon the reader? Let the queſtion be aſked about the three firſt centuries, and we can aſſign many and good reaſons why they muſt have been, in the general, better men than thoſe of the tenth or eleventh. Or if the reaſons ſhould not ſatisfy, we appeal to teſtimony, to certain fact, which ſuperſedes all reaſons. As to the fourth, fifth and ſixth centuries, they might decline in proportion, and did ſo, though there were ſome excellent men in all: which however I have no need to conſider.

A little

[q] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 26, 27.

A little after, he falls again to ſoftening, and now he aſks, "Muſt the fathers have been liable "to no failings, no paſſions, no errors, no ig-"norance at all[r]? But was that the queſtion? Why all this ſhifting and ſhuffling, if a man were not conſcious of a bad cauſe, and of his acting an unhandſome part? The fathers of the three firſt centuries (that golden age of chriſtianity, tried and purified in the fire of perſecution) though not exempt from failings, nor infallible, were yet men of a higher character than thoſe of the tenth or eleventh; and were not bad maſters, nor very poor guides, but the contrary: that is what we ſay, and what we abide by. He goes on to tell us, that he does "not "pretend to ſay," that they were all "a pack "of profligate wretches[s]." No; God forbid. I know not whether Celſus, Porphyry, or Julian would have ſaid ſuch a thing, in the greateſt extremity of their rage. They had ſome regard to truth, and to public report and to their own characters[t]. But though he does not ſay that, what will he at length ſay? "There "were" ſome "among them who were," in ſome meaſure, "men of piety and knowledge[u]." How hard

[r] Prefatory Diſc. p. 28.

[s] Ibid. p. 28.

[t] "The heathens themſelves, even ſuch as were the greateſt "enemies of the chriſtian religion, could not forbear often to "do juſtice to their great knowledge, and eminent ſanctity." So ſays F. Baltus in anſwer to Fontenelle. Continuation, &c. p. 97. And he inſtances in Porphyry, and the heathen philoſophers of his time. He mentions Libanus alſo, and Longinianus, and Maximus Madaurenſis.

[u] Ibid. p. 28.

hard to extort the ſlighteſt compliment upon thoſe great and good men! Though he can be laviſh enough elſewhere towards Confucius a pagan[v], and towards Hobbes[w], a reputed atheiſt. He proceeds again to paſs a decretory ſentence upon the fathers, in the ſame detracting way; that "Their virtues were, for the generality, far "from being any way conſiderable, and their "knowledge commonly falſe and confuſed[x]:" and he appears to be much offended with thoſe who would bring him back to the primitive food of huſks and acorns[y]. Yet the illuſtrious Grotius was plentifully fed with thoſe huſks, or elſe he had never been Grotius. And he had a very great eſteem and value for them: which, as it appears in all his works, ſo more particularly in that admirable treatiſe of his, his Syſtem of Morality. He underſtood the valuable uſe of them to that very ſcience, has intimated it over and over in expreſs words[z], and exemplified it quite through that excellent performance. I am aware that Monſ. Barbeyrac in his edition of Grotius, and in his French verſion, has notes of correction upon thoſe paſſages of his author, and condemns even his maſter Grotius now, as well as the fathers before. But Grotius was a wiſe man, and knew what he ſaid; beſides that the thing ſpeaks itſelf. I may add,

[v] Pref. Diſc. ſ. xv. p. 44.
[w] Ibid. ſ. xxix. p. 80.
[x] Ibid. p. 33.
[y] Ibid. p. 35.
[z] Grotius de Jur. B. et P. Proleg. n. li. p. 32, 33. Ed. 1720. Conf. L. i. C. 2. ſ. 9. p. 60.

add, that this gentleman himſelf, who has profited ſo much by Grotius and Pufendorf, (who profited by the fathers) has been in ſome meaſure obliged to the fathers, though it were only at ſecond or third hand. But the firſt hand is undoubtedly the beſt[a]. And if any man would expect ever to come up to Grotius, it muſt be, not merely by reading Grotius, but by reading as he read, and doing as he did[b].

The concluſion which the author makes, is ſuitable to the reſt, and runs thus: "Notwithſtanding that great inaccuracy of the fathers,

[a] "Conſtant reading of the moſt perfect modern books, which "does not go jointly on with the ancients in their turns, will, "by bringing the ancients into diſuſe, cauſe the learning of "the men of the next generation to ſink; by reaſon, that "they, not drawing from thoſe ſprings from whence thoſe "excellent moderns drew, whom they only propoſe to follow, "nor taking thoſe meaſures which theſe men took, muſt for "want of that foundation which their modern guides firſt "carefully laid, fail in no long compaſs of time." Wotton's Reflections, &c. Pref. p. 3.

[b] The learned Buddeus, a judicious and moderate man, and not prejudiced on the ſide of the fathers, does juſtice to them and to Grotius, both at once, in theſe remarkable words: "Sæpius igitur antiquiſſimis etiam eccleſiæ doctoribus, de "juris naturalis capitibus, haud perfunctoriè ſermo inſtituitur "Baſilium Magnum, Gregorium Nazianzenum, ipſumque Chry"ſoſtomum, non tantum græcæ, ſed univerſæ quacunque patet, "eccleſiæ ſummum decus evolvat, legat, ſcrutetur, cui dubium "forte ambiguumque id quod aſſeritur, videtur. Hos ingenio "acri, judicio ſingulari, juris hujus quæſtiones, quoties eas "attingerent (attigerunt autem ſæpius) expediviſſe conſtat. "Ut ipſe Hugo Grotius, reſtaurator hujus philoſophiæ feli"ciſſimus, tum demum et Pondus et Robur, et lucem inſignem, "ſe aſſertis ſuis conciliare poſſe, ſi præſulum horum auctori"tate ſententiam ſuam muniret, fuerit opinatus." Budd. Hiſtor. Juris naturalis, p. 16.

" fathers, which has often cauſed them to com-
" mit conſiderable errors; notwithſtanding that
" fancy they had for vain ſubtleties, which
" made them neglect things of greater import-
" ance: notwithſtanding all this, I ſay, the
" fundamental doctrines of religion and mora-
" lity have ſtill been preſerved amongſt chriſ-
" tians, even in the moſt diſmal ages of dark-
" neſs and vice[c]." Now, though here he is pleaſed to attribute no more (in reſpect of fundamentals) to the beſt and pureſt times, than to the moſt diſmal ages of darkneſs and vice (as before he had been pleaſed to compare the tenth and eleventh with the three firſt) yet one might have expected to find, that he had agreed however with thoſe firſt ages in all thoſe fundamentals, and have acknowledged his obligations to them for their care and zeal in handing them down to us. But he refers us, for explication of fundamentals, to a noted treatiſe of Le Clerc's, at the end of Grotius de Veritate Religionis Chriſtianæ. A. D. 1709. A treatiſe ſo indefinite and looſe, that one ſcarce knows what it aims at; except it be, that nothing ſhould paſs for a fundamental which has been ever diſputed by men calling themſelves chriſtians, and profeſſing ſcripture, however interpreted, to be their rule[d]. Which is

[c] Prefatory diſcourſe, p. 34.

[d] See that treatiſe of Le Clerc's briefly examined by Buddeus, in his Miſcellanea Sacra, Par I. p. 320.
Compare Turretin. de Articul. Fundament. p. 13. Frid. Spanh. T. iii. 1331.

is judging of important truths, not by the word of God ſoberly underſtood, nor by catholic tradition, nor by the reaſon of things, but by the floating humours and fancies of men; as if all chriſtian doctrines were to be expunged out of the liſt of neceſſaries, which have had the misfortune to be diſputed amongſt us, and a ſhort creed were to be made out of the remainder. But what if others, with Baron Herbert of Cherbury, or with the author of the fundamental conſtitutions of Carolina, building upon the ſame principles of latitude, and willing to compound all differences, ſhould adviſe us to admit nothing for a fundamental, but what all mankind have hitherto agreed in, and for the future ſhall agree in, atheiſts only excepted; where will then at length theſe preſumptuous ſchemes end? Or when will weak men leave off dictating to an all knowing God, preferring their own fond devices to the wiſdom of heaven?

To be ſhort, that treatiſe of Le Clerc's, while wholly intent upon diſcharging unneceſſaries (as he ſuppoſed them) takes no due care to preſerve the vitals of chriſtianity; but is much ſuch another cure for our religious ferments, as bleeding a man to death would be for a fever. I preſume, one principal view was, to throw out the doctrine of the Trinity; (though it might lead a great deal farther) and it was that conſideration chiefly, which induced him, and many others,

others, to vilify the ancient fathers of the chriſtian church[e]. But I proceed.

Mr. B. beſides his ill will towards the fathers, appears to diſcover ſomething of an unfriendly diſpoſition towards eccleſiaſtics at large, in more particulars than one. But he is particularly offended with the public ſermons, as ſeeming to him not very inſtructive on the head of morality[f]. His tranſlator here ſenſible of the indecency of the reflection, endeavours to excuſe and ſoften it by a note; ſuggeſting that he might intend it only againſt ſermons and books in French, not againſt the compoſitions of the Engliſh or Dutch. It was kindly offered. But I find not that the author himſelf has any where made the exception, or inſinuated that he intended any. However, admitting that he had a view to the French only, yet the reflection can hardly be acquitted of ſome degree of immodeſty. For, ſurely, the French proteſtant divines have deſerved a better treatment. He quotes Placette

[e] Serio hæc mecum penſitanti, vix ulla commodior occurrit ratio, quam quod ſancti Patres Catholicæ Fidei, Nicænorumque dogmatum teſtes ſint inconcuſſi, vindices acerrimi: qui fidem ab apoſtolis traditam, a majoribus acceptam, ad nos uſque propagârunt, acceptam, vitâ, voce, etiam et ſanguine ſuo confirmârunt, invictiſque argumentis contra omnia hæreticorum molimina ſartam tectam conſervârunt; quique nullis ſophiſmatibus flecti queant, ut in unitariorum cauſam teſtimonium dicant. Hinc illæ lachrymæ! Hæc fundi calamitas. Adeo ut de antiquitate eccleſiaſticâ dici poteſt quod de ratione alicubi habet Malmſburienſis philoſophus: ubicunque ratio homini repugnat, hominem ipſi rationi repugnaturum. Cave, Epiſt. Apologet. p. 17. Conf. p. 23.

[f] Prefatory Diſc. ſ. xi. p. 35.

Placette and Oſtervald to give ſome colour to his invective. But neither of them will bear him out in any ſuch general aſperſions upon their whole body. For what if divines ordinarily, (as civilians alſo) fall ſhort of Grotius and Pufendorf; or what if they do not follow the ſame laboured method (any more than the ſermon on the mount did) yet their diſcourſes may be very inſtructive, and the more ſo for their artleſs ſimplicity, being better adapted to the capacities of common hearers. There are many inſtructive ways of inculcating moral precepts: and it is by no means ſerving morality, to diſparage all others for the ſake of one which a man chuſes to be fond of, perhaps as thinking it his own. It is natural enough for any perſon to applaud his own taſte, and to prefer his own way. But ſtill it muſt be acknowledged, that there is more of human infirmity, than there is of equity or juſtice in it. Ancients ought to have their due praiſes, as well as moderns; and divines as well as civilians. And it is not fair dealing to monopolize eſteem, or to affect to draw all into one channel, where a man has placed himſelf to receive it, diſregarding his neighbour.

It is very true, what this gentleman ſays, that it was not any of the eccleſiaſtics, or profeſſors of divinity[g], who drew up that vaſt ſyſtem of morality which Grotius is ſo juſtly famed for. It was a work proper for ſo large a genius,

[g] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 36.

a genius, and ſo accompliſhed a civilian and ſtateſman. Eccleſiaſtics, I am confident, are ſo far from envying him the great honour, which he thereby acquired, without ſeeking it, that they would be heartily glad if every other writer of his profeſſion were like him, and equal to him, in learning, candor, capacity, gravity, ſincerity. This gentleman does not make a juſt report, when he ſays, that "The eccleſiaſtics, "inſtead of returning thanks to Grotius, for "his excellent work, every where declared "againſt him, and that many even proteſtant "divines laboured to cry it down[a]." He ſhould have been content to ſay, that the romaniſts condemned it[b], while the proteſtants in general, divines and others, juſtly eſteemed it, and the reformed univerſities paid ſuitable regards to it[c]. It was not a divine but a civilian[d], who firſt appeared againſt it. And why may I not add, that divines at this day, probably, have a greater eſteem of the work, and a truer value for it, than the laſt civilian who tranſlated it, and who has animadverted ſometimes too freely upon it. Who is

[a] Prefatory Diſc. p. 36.

[b] Nec quiſquam quam diu vixit Grotius, contra eos (Grotii Libros) quicquam movere auſus eſt, niſi quod tertio ab eo tempore quo prodierunt anno, 1627, die quarto Februarii, ab Inquiſitionis quod Romæ eſt officio, nota hæreſeos inureretur.

Buddei Hiſtor. Jur. Naturalis, p. 31, 32.

Conf. Bayle Diction. in Grotius. Note O.

[c] Creſcere tum in dies exiſtimatio de utilitatibus librorum Grotii; ut in academiis viri docti eoſdem prælegere et interpretari conſultum ducerent. Buddeus ibid, p. 39. Conf. Bayle in Note O.

[d] Johannes a Felden, A. D. 1653.

is it that has told the world, that the incomparable Grotius was "not throughly acquainted "with the art of thinking juſtly?" Is it not this very gentleman[e] detracting from Grotius, to compliment the author of the Parrhaſiana, who had ſaid the ſame thing before[f]. It was Grotius's misfortune, it ſeems, to fall half a century ſhort, in the art of juſt thinking. But what pains will not ſome men take to draw reputation to their own apartments. Firſt, diſparaging ancients in compariſon of moderns, to bring it ſo much nearer towards themſelves; next, excluding divines at large, to fix it among critics, or civilians; then highly extolling two or three very eminent perſonages, to beat off rivals, and as it were to devolve all repute upon them for a ſeaſon; laſtly, giving broad intimations, that there are yet greater men than thoſe, as to true reaſoning, (a prime excellency) and the perfection of juſt thinking. And who ſhould theſe at length be, but the ſame that ſit as judges upon them, as upon all the reſt? Various are the windings and turnings of ſelf love, and its illuſions many. But I forbear. Theſe reflections, if not capable of the ſtricteſt proof, yet have moſt undoubtedly greater appearances of truth[g], than moſt of thoſe unworthy aſperſions caſt upon the primitive fathers.

After

[e] Prefatory Diſcourſe, p. 79.

[f] Le Clerc's Parrhaſiana. p. 247, 248. Engl. edit.

[g] Qui ita omnia reprehendunt, et inveteratæ exiſtimationis auctores tam lubenter explodunt, plerumque id agunt ut ſoli habeantur laude digni: vel certe ad ſuum judicium, quaſi ab erroribus

After all, we take not upon us, to acquit the fathers of all kinds of miſtakes or of human frailties; for we very well know that they were men, though excellent men. All we deſire is, that no errors may be imputed more than belong to them, nor that thoſe which they really gave into, be aggravated beyond reaſon; nor that that wherein any of them ſingly offended, be collectively thrown upon them all. In ſhort, we deſire no favour in their behalf, but truth, juſtice, equity, candor, and humanity, which are due to all men, living or dead; and much more to perſons of ſuch exemplary virtues, and ſo exalted a character in the churches of Chriſt [h]. I ſhall only add, that had the fathers, ſeveral of them, really fallen into as many errors of doctrine, as ſome would make us believe they did, yet our two main poſitions would ſtand firm as before: viz. 1. That from the writings of the fathers, taken with other collateral evidences, we may competently learn as to matter of fact [i], what was the general ſenſe of the three firſt

erroribus humanis immune, omnia aliena volunt conformata; quod arrogantiæ eſt haud vulgaris. Perizonius, Q. Curt. vindicat. p. 192.

[h] Recte igitur noſtri docent, æquitatis legem poſtulare, ut quos propter multa præclare dicta non æquamus ſcripturæ, eoſdem propter nævos et errores nonnullos protinus non rejiciamus. Circumtulerunt et ipſi carnem et ſanguinem; faſſi ſunt, ſe humanæ infirmitati obnoxios. Perhumane igitur tractandi ſunt, non protervè fugillandi. Rivet. Tractat. de Patr. Autoritat. C. x. p. 65.

[i] A proper diſtinction ſhould be made (as I before hinted) between the reaſonings of the fathers and their teſtimonies as

firſt centuries, in the important articles of faith[k]. 2. That the hiſtorical knowledge of the fact ſo teſtified, may be of very great uſe to us, for the interpreting of ſcripture, ſo far as concerns thoſe articles, and for guarding the word of God againſt any novel and dangerous miſconſtructions.

VI. It has been ſometimes objected, that the fathers were but very indifferent critics upon ſcripture, and that they frequently miſinterpreted particular texts. A learned writer has been at the pains to draw up a moderate octavo, full of ſuppoſed examples of that kind, beginning with Geneſis, and deſcending regularly through the ſcripture, almoſt as far as the Revelations[l]. He had a wide field to range in, four or five whole centuries, and more. And if any thing amiſs, by way of comment, happened to drop from any father, in all that time, perhaps in ſome very haſty compoſition, ſome extempore homily, or the like, that muſt be brought in to ſwell the account. And whatſoever any one ſingly has offended

to fact. Of which ſee Dodwell. Diſſert. in Iren. i. ſ. xliii. p. 77, &c. Biſhop Smalbroke Vindicat. of Miracles, &c. Vol. i. p. 123.

[k] Nihil dubii eſſe poſſit, quin per duo ſaltem aut tria ab apoſtolis ſecula, eccleſia in primitivo ſuo vigore, atque, ut ita loquar, virginitate permanſerit: eodem nimirum ſtatu quo ab ipſis apoſtolis relicta fuit; niſi quod novæ ſubinde hæreſes iſtis etiam diebus erumperent, quibus eccleſia exercitata fuit, minime corrupta: haud magis ſcilicet quam eccleſia apoſtolica ab iſtis hæreſibus depravata fuit quæ apoſtolis adhuc ſuperſtitibus emergebant; vix citius enim exortæ ſunt quam ab eccleſiâ rejectæ. Bevereg. Cod. Can. vindic. in Procem. ſ. vii.

[l] Whitby, Diſſert. de Script. Interpret.

offended in a ſingle place (ſomewhere elſe perhaps making us amends for it) he is to bear the odium of it; and not only he, but all his predeceſſors, and ſucceſſors for ſo many centuries, all that paſs under the name of fathers. For the deſign is to ſhew, that the fathers in general were very weak men. It would be tedious to enter into a detail of the texts, ſaid to be miſinterpreted. Therefore I ſhall only obſerve, as follows, upon the examination I have made. 1. That ſome of the interpretations found fault with, are true and juſt interpretations, blamed without reaſon, and brought in only for ſhew. 2. Several others are doubtful, and many claim candid allowances. 3. Some are miſreported, or repreſented otherwiſe than the good fathers intended. 4. Moſt of the blameable ones are of the allegorical kind. And they very often are not ſo properly interpretations (for the fathers generally admitted a literal interpretation beſides, of the ſame texts) as a kind of moral or ſpiritual uſes or improvements raiſed upon the texts, for the practical edification of the people. The deſign ſeems to have been much the ſame (only employed upon a nobler ſubject) with what ſeveral pious perſons have attempted, in endeavouring to turn every common incident of life, every thing they hear, read, or ſee to ſome ſpiritual improvement, by appoſite reflections or meditations. The reader may find a ſpecimen of ſuch ſpiritual exerciſes as I ſpeak of in the

very pious and ingenious Mr. Boyle, in his treatiſe intituled, "Occaſional Reflections upon ſeveral Subjects." Such a kind of exerciſe I take many of thoſe allegorical comments (thoſe eſpecially of the tropological kind) to have been. They were well meant, and had their uſe, though often carried too far; but, in ſtrictneſs, they were not interpretations of ſcripture, but rather pious meditations upon ſcripture. I am ſenſible that ſome of them were intended as interpretations. But, in the general, and for the moſt part, I conceive, they were rather what I have ſaid.

5. But ſuppoſing that the fathers ſometimes, or often miſtook in their interpretations of ſcripture (in ſuch texts more eſpecially upon which no fundamental doctrine of the church depended, nor perhaps was concerned in) what can be ſuppoſed to follow from ſuch a conceſſion? Nothing, ſo far as I can yet apprehend, that will at all affect our preſent queſtion. It may be allowed, and cannot indeed juſtly be denied, that modern critics and divines, of the firſt rank, having the light of the fathers before them, and greater ſkill in the languages, and many additional helps which the fathers wanted, are better textuaries, upon the whole[m], than the ableſt of the ancients were, or than all the fathers

[m] Eruditionem patribus, aut ſagacitatem in ſequelis colligendis, potiorem nullam aſſerimus quam coævis aliis eorundum temporum ſcriptoribus: ſed nec potiorem illis antiquis in univerſum, quam junioribus noſtris. Quin bonas literas ſtudioſius excultas a nuperis noſtris eccleſiæ reformatoribus libenter agnoſcimus: nec in philoſophiâ modo, ſed in antiquitate, in ipſis etiam

fathers together, becauſe they contain them, in a manner, or the beſt things in them, with additional improvements. But admitting all this, it concludes nothing againſt the uſe or value of the ancients, but ſuppoſes it all the time. Beſides, the ſtreſs is not laid upon any critical acumen of the fathers in interpreting every particular text, but upon their faithfulneſs in relating what was the doctrine of the church, as to the prime things, in their times, or before, and upon their interpretation of ſome remarkable and leading texts (ſuch for inſtance, as John i. 1.) upon which chiefly the fundamental doctrines were conceived to reſt. From whence it is manifeſt, that the learned collector of erroneous comments (ſuppoſing his repreſentations juſt, which they often are not) has ſhot wide of the mark. And indeed he was ſenſible of it[n]; however notwithſtanding he thought fit to publiſh his collection. He acknowledges our meaning

etiam linguis illorum temporum vernaculis. Sed et preſſiorem noſtris et ſolidiorem argumentandi methodum agnoſcimus quam ſit alia illa laxior, et ſophiſtica, et declamatoria, quæ non apud Patres duntaxat, ſed et alios eorundem temporum ſcriptores erat receptiſſima. Itaque, exceptis illis quæ ad fidem pertinent, aut quæ ad propriorum temporum hiſtoriam; in aliis facile ferimus diſſentientes, judicanteſque de eorum ratiociniis juniores. Sed vero in coævis ſcriptoribus intelligunt coævi etiam idiotæ, quæ lateant remotiorum ſeculorum etiam eruditiſſimos. Dodwell, Diſſert. in Iren. in Prefat. ſ. 15.

[n] Nec hoc in animum induxiſſe hos patrum antiſtites exiſtimo (quod eorum verba præ ſe ferunt) nempè ſacras ſcripturas interpretandas eſſe juxta ſenſum quem Patres de iis ſpeciatim, verbiſque conceptis exhibuerunt, quemque nos in hoc opere protulimus; ſed tantum eas interpretandas eſſe juxta doctrinam

ing to be no more than this, that ſcripture be interpreted by the general doctrine of the ancient church, in the prime things[p]. But then he runs on to call it impoſing a ſenſe upon ſcripture, inſtead of taking one from it; making the fathers ſpeak for Chriſt, inſtead of permitting Chriſt to ſpeak for himſelf, and the like. Now indeed, if every man that ſhould undertake to interpret ſcripture out of his own head, were infallibly certain to make Chriſt ſpeak for himſelf, and were in no manner of danger of impoſing a ſenſe upon him, there would be ſome weight in ſuch reaſoning. But did Socinus, did Arius, did Sabellius, did Valentinus, or an hundred more, ſucceed ſo well in that way, that that ſhould be recommended as the only ſafe way of delivering the mind of Chriſt? It is granted on all hands, that ſcripture ſhould ſpeak its own ſenſe, and that no foreign ſenſe ought to be impoſed upon it. But then one of the beſt rules we can think of to ſecure to it its own ſenſe,

quam exiſtimant apud primævos patres obtinuiſſe. Quod quidem non eſt ſenſum ſcripturæ ex verbis ſcripturæ accipere, ſed ſenſum patrum ſcripturis adferre, &c. Whitby, Diſſert. Præf. p. 19.

[p] This matter is very clearly and accurately expreſſed by Mr. Thorndike.

Eſt enim magnopere advertendum, cum definiendam ex traditione eccleſiæ ſcripturæ ſententiam dico, non hoc me velle quaſi teneri poſſit ſenſus ſcripturæ traditione (quis enim putet ſcripturarum ſcientiam, omni literarum genere conſtantem, traditione teneri poſſe?) ſed quod recuſandum ſit, tanquam a vero ſcripturæ ſenſu alienum, quicquid in traditionem incurrit: quod eſt dicere, intra fines traditionis continendam eſſe interpretationem ſcripturæ. Thorndike de ration. Fin. contr. p. 147.

Compare Sherlock. Socin. contr. p. 78.

ſenſe, and to exclude all foreign ſenſes, is to keep to the old ſenſe (while the words will bear it, much more if they require it) which obtained from the beginning, among the churches favoured in a very particular manner by the illuſtrious preſence of the ſpirit of God[q].

VII. It has been ſometimes objected, that there have been fathers againſt fathers, councils againſt councils, and warm conteſts amongſt the ancient doctors themſelves; particularly about the time for obſerving Eaſter, and about heretical baptiſms. All which we allow, but further plead, that the more they differed in rituals, or matters of diſcipline (things of ſlighter concern) the more regard is to be paid to them in the greater matters wherein they all agreed. For if they would not ſuffer any innovation, or the appearance of any, even in the ſmaller matters, but were exceeding jealous of every thing that looked new, and were prepared to oppoſe any perſon or

[q] The very judicious and learned Ger. Voſſius ſpeaks excellently well on this head.

Ante omnia quidem ſcrutandum, quid Deus dicat in verbo ſuo. Sed ne perperam illud interpretemur, quando omnes ad errorem ſumus proclives, attendere etiam debemus, non modo quid unus et alter, ſed omnino quid conſtanter docuerit eccleſia Dei. Quantopere enim repugnat perſpicuitati ſcripturæ, ſi ita exaratæ credantur, ut ab apoſtolorum exceſſu, ne in præcipuis quidem fidei capitibus, ipſi eas eccleſiarum doctiſſimi ceperint antiſtites! Quantum item adverſatur bonitati Dei et amori erga nos, ſi per tot ſecula, ad ſcripturarum intelligentiam defuiſſe ſtatuamus Spiritum Dei, viris licet pietate et ſanctimoniâ præcellentibus, eccleſiæque ſemper commendatiſſimis, atque eo melioribus quo apoſtolicis propiores erant temporibus. Voſſ. in Epiſt. ad Forbeſ. præfix. Hiſtor. Inſtruct A. D. 1645.

or perſons, how conſiderable ſoever in ſtation, age, or dignity, rather than admit a novelty; how can we imagine that they ſhould all ſo unanimouſly agree in the doctrine of our Lord's divinity, if it were not old doctrine, the faith which was once delivered unto the ſaints? Their differences in inferior matters to ſtrengthen the plea drawn from their unanimity in this, and ſo are an argument on our ſide, rather than any objection againſt us[r].

VIII. It has been objected[s], that our ſixth article condemns the method of interpreting ſcripture by antiquity, or, at leaſt, ſuperſedes it; becauſe it ſays: HOLY SCRIPTURE CONTAINETH ALL THINGS NECESSARY TO SALVATION; SO THAT WHATSOEVER IS NOT READ THEREIN, NOR MAY BE PROVED THEREBY, IS NOT TO BE REQUIRED OF ANY MAN, THAT IT SHOULD BE BELIEVED AS AN ARTICLE OF FAITH, OR NECESSARY TO SALVATION. The article ſays nothing but what is perfectly right, and perfectly conſiſtent with all we have been pleading

[r] Daillè himſelf argues in like manner, as we here do. "As for thoſe differences in opinion which are ſometimes "found amongſt them, touching ſome certain points of religion, ſome whereof we have formerly ſet down; theſe "things are ſo far from taking off any thing from the weight "of their teſtimonies, as that on the contrary, they add rather "very much to the ſame. For this muſt acquit their conſenting, of all ſuſpicion that ſome perſons might have, that it "proceeded from ſome combination, or ſome correſpondence "and mutual intelligence." Daillè, Uſe of the Fathers, Part ii. C. 6. p. 186. Conf. Bevereg. Cod. Can. Vindicat. in Procem. ſ. 5.

[s] Whitby, Diſſert. p. 4.

pleading for. We allow no doctrine as neceſſary, which ſtands only on fathers, or on tradition, oral or written. We admit none for ſuch, but what is contained in ſcripture, and proved by ſcripture, rightly interpreted. And we know of no way more ſafe in neceſſaries, to preſerve the right interpretation, than to take the ancients along with us[t]. We think it a good method to ſecure our rule of faith againſt impoſtures of all kinds; whether of enthuſiaſm, or falſe criticiſm, or conceited reaſon, or oral tradition, or the aſſuming dictates of an infallible chair. If we thus preſerve the true ſenſe of ſcripture, and upon that ſenſe build our faith, we then build upon ſcripture only; for the ſenſe of ſcripture is ſcripture[u]. Suppoſe a man were to prove

[t] So the great Caſaubon, ſpeaking both of himſelf and for the church of England; and at the ſame time for Melancthon, and Calvin alſo.

Opto cum Melancthone et eccleſiâ Anglicanâ, per canalem antiquitatis deduci ad nos dogmata fidei, e fonte ſacræ ſcripturæ derivata. Alioquin quis futuris eſt novandi finis? —— Etſi omnis mea voluptas eſt et ſola, verſari in lectione ſacræ ſcripturæ, nullam tamen inde me hauſiſſe propriam ſententiam nullam habere, neque unquam σὺν θεῷ εἰπεῖν, eſſe habiturum. Magni Calvini hæc olim fuit mens, cum ſcriberet præfationem ſuam in commentarium epiſtolæ ad Romanos; non debere nos ἐν τοῖς κυριωτάτοις, a conſenſu eccleſiæ recedere. A. D. 1611. Caſaub. Epiſt. 744. Dan. Heinſio, p. 434. Edit. 3tia Rotterdami.

[u] "We reverently receive the unanimous tradition or doc-
" trine of the church in all ages, which determines the mean-
" ing of the holy ſcripture, and makes it more clear and un-
" queſtionable in any point of faith, wherein we can find it
" hath declared its ſenſe. For, we look upon this tradition as
" nothing elſe but the ſcripture unfolded: not a new thing
" which is not in the ſcripture, but the ſcripture explained and
" made more evident." Dr. (afterward Biſhop) Patrick's Diſcourſe about Tradition, p. 18. Printed A. D. 1683.

prove his legal title to an eſtate; he appeals to the laws: the true ſenſe and meaning of the laws muſt be proved by the beſt rules of interpretation; but, after all, it is the law that gives the title, and that only. In like manner, after uſing all proper means to come at the ſenſe of ſcripture (which is ſcripture) it is that, and that only which we ground our faith upon, and prove our faith by. We alledge not fathers as grounds, or principles, or foundations of our faith, but as witneſſes, and as interpreters, and faithful conveyers.

That the church of England has a very particular regard to antiquity, may ſufficiently appear from a canon ſet forth in the ſame year, when our articles were firſt perfected and authorized by act of parliament, namely, in the year 1571. By that canon it is provided, "That "preachers ſhall not preſume to deliver any "thing from the pulpit, as of moment, to be "religiouſly obſerved and believed by the peo- "ple, but that which is agreeable to the doctrine "of the old and new Teſtament, and collected "out of the ſame doctrine by the catholic "fathers and the biſhops of the ancient church[v]." A wiſe regulation, formed with exquiſite judgment, and worded with the exacteſt caution. The

[v] Imprimis vero videbunt [concionatores] ne quid unquam doceant pro concione, quod a populo religioſe teneri et credi velint, niſi quod conſentaneum ſit doctrinæ veteris aut novi teſtamenti, quodque ex illâ ipsâ doctrinâ catholici patres et veteres epiſcopi collegerint. Sparrow Collect. p. 237.

The canon does not order, that they ſhall teach whatever had been taught by fathers; no, that would have been ſetting up a new rule of faith: neither does it ſay, that they ſhall teach whatſoever the fathers had collected from ſcripture; no, that would have been making them infallible interpreters, or infallible reaſoners. The doctrine muſt be found firſt in ſcripture. Only to be the more ſecure that we have found it there, the fathers are to be called in, to be as it were conſtant checks upon the preſumption or wantonneſs of private interpretation. But then again, as to private interpretation, there is liberty enough allowed to it. Preachers are not forbidden to interpret this or that text, or hundreds of texts, differently from what the fathers have done; provided ſtill they keep within the analogy of faith, and preſume not to raiſe any new doctrine. Neither are they altogether reſtrained from teaching any thing new, provided it be offered as opinion only, or an inferior truth, and not preſſed as neceſſary upon the people. For it was thought, that there could be no neceſſary article of faith or doctrine now drawn from ſcripture, but what the ancients had drawn out before, from the ſcripture. To ſay otherwiſe, would imply that the ancients had failed univerſally in neceſſaries, which is morally abſurd.

From this account it may appear, that the church of England is exactly in the ſame ſentiments which I have been pleading for.

And

And indeed, if there be any church now in the world, which truly reverences antiquity, and pays a proper regard to it, it is this church[w]. The romaniſts talk of antiquity, while we obſerve and follow it. For, with them, both ſcripture and fathers are, as to the ſenſe, under the correction and control of the preſent church[x]. With us, the preſent church ſays nothing, but under the direction of ſcripture and antiquity taken together, one as the rule, and the other as the

[w] Eccleſia Anglicana hoc ſe univerſo orbi charactere dignoſcendum, hoc æquæ poſteritati æſtimandum proponit, quod in controverſiis fidei aut praxeos decernendis, illud firmum ratumque ſemper habuerit (et huic baſi reformationem Britannicam niti voluerit) ut ſcripturis primæ, dein primorum ſæculorum epiſcopis, martyribus, ſcriptoribus eccleſiaſticis ſecundæ deferrentur. Hammond contr. Blondell. in prælim. C. xiv. ſ. 13.

Rex cum eccleſiâ Anglicanâ pronuntiat, eam demum ſe doctrinam pro verâ ſimul et neceſſariâ ad ſalutem agnoſcere, quæ e fonte ſacræ ſcripturæ manans, per conſenſum veteris eccleſiæ, ceu per canalem, ad hæc tempora fuerit derivata. Caſaubon Epiſt. ad Perron. 838. p. 493. A. D. 1612.

Quod ſi me conjectura non fallit, totius reformationis pars integerrima eſt in Angliâ, ubi cum ſtudio veritatis, viget ſtudium antiquitatis. Idem ad Salmaſ. Epiſt. 837. p. 489. A. D. 1612.

[x] Vid. Rivet. Tract. de Patr. Authoritate, C. vii. p. 40, &c. Patrick on Tradition, p. 41. Stillingfleet's rational account, Part i. C. 5. p. 80, &c.

N. B. In the 14th article of the creed of Pope Pius IV. the words run thus. "I do receive the holy ſcriptures in the ſame ſenſe that holy mother church doth, and always hath—neither will I receive and interpret them otherwiſe than according to the unanimous conſent of the fathers." Here are two contradictory things blended together, the ſenſe of their preſent church, and the unanimous conſent of fathers: which are no more to be reconciled, than light and darkneſs; except it be by making antiquity as much a Leſbian rule, as they make the ſcripture. I follow the copy of that creed given in Latin and Engliſh at the end of Dr. Hickes's Letters, publiſhed A. D. 1705.

the pattern or interpreter. Among them, it is the preſent church that ſpeaks pretending ſcripture and fathers: with us, ſcripture and fathers really ſpeak by the church. I have before thrown in ſome teſtimonies of the high regard which our church pays to antiquity. And if the reader deſires more of like kind, he may pleaſe to conſult ſuch as have collected them, ſome of which I refer to at the bottom of the page[y].

IX. It may ſtill be objected, that the appealing to antiquity may be both fruitleſs, and endleſs, and can never decide differences, or ſilence diſputes, becauſe all parties almoſt have or may put in their claim to it; and as it will be hard to decide among the ſeveral claimants, ſo the whole will terminate in confuſion[z]: therefore the ſhorteſt and beſt method is, to throw off antiquity, and to abide by ſcripture alone. This objection does, in ſome meaſure, fall

[y] Scrivener. adv. Dallæum. Par. i. C. 9. p. 57, &c.
Dr. Puller's Moderation of the Church of England, p. 80, &c.
Bull. Apolog. pro Harmon. ſ. 1. p. 634.
Grabe, Spicileg. Vol. I. in Præfatione.
Saywell, Præfat. Apologet. præfix. Launoii. Epiſt. A. D. 1689.

"It is a calumny, to affirm that the church of England re-
"jects all tradition. And I hope, none of her children are ſo
"ignorant, as when they hear that word, to imagine they muſt
"riſe up and oppoſe it. No, the ſcripture itſelf is a tradition;
"and we admit all other traditions which are ſubordinate and
"agreeable to that; together with all thoſe things which can
"be proved to be apoſtolical, by the general teſtimony of the
"church in all ages." Patrick on Tradition, p. 48.

[z] Whitby, Diſſertat. Præfat. p. 28, 75, 80.

fall in with others before mentioned. But becauſe it contains, in a manner, the ſum and ſubſtance of ſeveral, I ſhall return a diſtinct anſwer to it, in ſo many particulars.

1. I would obſerve, that ſince all parties almoſt have put in their claim to antiquity, it is a certain ſign that they have a value and eſteem for it, and think it of ſome force. They appeal to ſcripture alſo, becauſe it is of weight. One has a plea from it, and another a pretence. Whatever is worth the having where it is to be had, will be alſo thought worth the counterfeiting, where it is not: therefore, we may expect, in ſuch caſes, counterfeit ſcripture and counterfeit antiquity, to give colour to falſe claims, as well as genuine ſcripture and genuine antiquity, to ſupport true ones. All this ſhews that it is commonly thought a great advantage to have antiquity on one ſide, and as great a diſadvantage to any cauſe, to want it. Men would never contend about it, were it worthleſs, or inſignificant. They would not take pains to adulterate the coin, if the coin itſelf were not valuable. Therefore let us not too haſtily part with any thing, which all parties[a] either openly ſpeak well of, or ſecretly covet and admire[b].

2. As

[a] Vid. Hoornbeck. Socin. Confut. T. I. C. vi. p. 86, &c.

[b] It is remarkable of Socinus who cotemned tradition and all the ancients, undertaking to coin a new religion from ſcripture alone; I ſay, it is remarkable of him, that when he found that his diſciples would not ſubmit to worſhip Chriſt, after all he could bring from ſcripture to perſuade them to it, he reminded

2. As to deciding differences, or ſilencing diſputes, it is granted that antiquity will not always be effectual, neither will ſcripture; neither indeed will any thing but what would be effectual to make all men humble and modeſt, wiſe and good. That ſo many ſeveral ſects and parties differ ſo widely from each other, and from the truth, is not generally owing to this, that their different interpretations of ſcripture have led them into different opinions in religion, but their different opinions have led them into different interpretations. All muſt of neceſſity pretend colour, at leaſt, from ſcripture, (if they would not be taken for madmen, or infidels) and if true interpretation will not anſwer the purpoſe, falſe muſt come up of courſe. So, it is in vain to caſt about for any rules of interpretation, as certain remedies for the healing differences, or ending all diſputes. The diſeaſe lies deeper, and is too ſtubborn for human means. There is no infallible preſervative, no irreſiſtible expedient againſt hereſy, any more than againſt any other vices. Neither ought there to be any; for then a right belief would be no matter of choice, nor faith any longer a virtue, as God deſigned it ſhould be. We pretend not therefore to infallible

minded them of the ancient and univerſal practice of ſaints and martyrs, as an argument to prove that ſuch was the ſenſe of ſcripture. Quia nimis aperte in ſanctis literis ea illi tribui animadvertunt, &c. [Ad Matt. Radec. Epiſt. 3. p. 391.] An argument which, if he had uniformly attended to it, ought to have given ſome check to his moſt exorbitant wantonneſs, and ſelf ſufficiency in other matters.

fallible cures by any means whatever. But though we cannot expect to work miracles by the help of antiquity and ſcripture together, (for hereſies there will be notwithſtanding, and ſcripture itſelf intimates there muſt be[a]) yet they are both of them of very great uſe, and may have their effect, in a human way, among reaſonable men; which is ſufficient. We are very ſenſible, that they who ſtudy to pervert ſcripture, will pervert tradition too, and will often turn thoſe weapons againſt the truth, which were intended only for defence of it. That is an inconvenience common to a thouſand other caſes beſides this. We muſt be content to bear with it, and to conduct as prudently as we can, under direction from the word of God. And when we have ſo done all that is proper, or required, and without effect, the appeal muſt lie to the common reaſon of mankind; and there it muſt reſt till the cauſe comes to be heard before a higher tribunal.

3. But though ſcripture and antiquity may both of them be reſiſted, or both perverted, and are not certainly effectual, nor intended to be ſo, yet both together are of greater force than ſcripture ſingly can be; and that is reaſon ſufficient for ſuperadding antiquity. Two witneſſes are better than one, though one be ſuperior; and two proofs of the ſame thing (though one be as primary, and the other ſecondary) amount to more than either of them ſingly can do. Every additional light contributes

[a] 1 Cor. xi. 19.

tributes ſome luſtre, and every acceſſional weight helps to turn the ſcale. A man may be able to evade ſcripture alone, who may not be able to evade both ſcripture and antiquity; or if he can evade both, yet perhaps not ſo eaſily. Therefore, if the taking in antiquity is of ſervice, as it reinforces truth, and bears the harder upon error[b], it is worth the urging, for the ſame reaſon as all kinds of arguments, or diſſuaſives againſt ſin and wickedneſs, are to be urged in due place.

4. Laſtly, I muſt obſerve, that there is no ſuch great difficulty, as ſome perſons may fancy, in diſtinguiſhing falſe claims from true, or in pointing out among the ſeveral claimants, where the right lies. Men of ready wit and invention may draw up a catalogue of innumerable difficulties, taking in all ſuch as might poſſibly happen in any caſe, and throwing them together, ſo as to make up one large and floating idea of difficulty, for the reader to apply to every caſe. But if one looks a little cloſer into any particular inſtance, he will be ſurprized to find how eaſy it is, after all, to form a judgment of it, and that not a hundred part perhaps of that general confuſe idea of difficulty does really belong to it. If a man were inclined to hear what fine harangues might

[b] Quis vero non fateatur, præſcriptione ejuſmodi multum firmari animos noſtros in genuinâ ſcripturæ interpretatione, validius quoque munitiuſque hæreſes refelli? Quare hoc armorum genere ſemper pugnatum fuit a ſanctis patribus: qui præcipue quidem ſe tuentur ſcripturæ auctoritate, nec tamen prætereunt primorum temporum conſenſum. Gerard. Voſſ. Epiſt. ad Forbeſ.

might be made upon the uncertainty of the reports of ſenſe, how often and how many ſeveral ways, his eyes or ears, or other ſenſes might deceive him, (which may be illuſtrated with great variety of inſtances from hiſtory, embelliſhed with all the ornaments of wit and fancy) he might be apt, for ſome time, almoſt to miſtruſt his ſenſes, and to take life itſelf for a dream. But notwithſtanding all, when he comes to conſider uſe and experience, he will ſoon find, that his ſenſes may, for the moſt part, be ſecurely truſted to, without danger of deception, and that it is ſcarce once in a thouſand trials, that they lead him into error. The like may be ſaid, with regard to the ſtudied harangues drawn up by ſome writers, about the uncertainty of all tradition, and the obſcurity of the fathers, and the danger of deception. They amount only to looſe, general diſcourſe, which may ſeem, at firſt, to have ſomething in it[c], but is ſoon confuted by uſe and experience, the ſafeſt criterion to judge by. The truth of what I ſay, may beſt appear by an induction of particulars; and therefore I ſhall next briefly run over the moſt obſervable pretences to tradition, ancient and modern (ſuch as at preſent occur to me) that we may judge from the particular inſtances how that caſe ſtands.

Baſilides,

[c] Legi libros de abuſu patrum, et quidem ſæpius: ſed neſcio quomodo, dum lego, aſſentior, cum poſui libros, et mecum ipſe de nervis argumentorum cœpi cogitare, aſſenſio omnis illa elabatur. Zornius, p. 665.

Baſilides, of the firſt or ſecond century, and his partizans, pleaded antiquity, and put in their claim to tradition, deriving it by one Glaucias, from St. Peter himſelf[d]. But the vanity and folly of the plea was apparent at firſt ſight. And no ſenſible man could ever think it at all reaſonable to give credit to a wandering tale, or to that obſcure Glaucias, rather than to certain fact, (appearing in ſcripture, and in the churches founded by St. Peter) that St. Peter's doctrine was quite another thing from what Baſilides had fathered upon him.

Valentinus, of the ſecond century, and his diſciples, pleaded antiquity alſo, as well as ſcripture, and fetched their doctrine by one Theodades, as they ſaid, from the apoſtle Paul[e]. A likely matter! that Theodades, whoever he was, ſhould know more of St. Paul's mind, than all the churches founded by that bleſſed apoſtle. The fillineſs of ſuch a plea betrayed itſelf at once; and but to name it, was to expoſe it.

The Marcionites, along with the Baſilidians and Valentinians, pretended alſo to derive their common doctrines down by tradition from the apoſtle Matthias[f]. But their plea was mere artifice and pretence, and was effectually confuted by the ſtanding doctrine of all the apoſtolical churches. By their common doctrines, I mean

[d] Clemens Alexandrin. Strom. vii. p. 898. Ed. Oxon.
[e] Clem. Alex. ibid.
[f] Clem. Alex. Strom. vii. p. 900. Conf. Dodwell, Diſſert. in Iren. i. p. 48.

I mean ſuch as they all agreed in, as about the origin of evil, and the denial of Chriſt's real humanity, or the like.

The artemonians, of the third century, pretended tradition for their hereſy, from the apoſtles themſelves, and by the apoſtolical churches[g]. Which was ſaying ſomething, had they been able to make out the fact. But the falſity of the report was palpable, and a child might ſee it. For they had contrived their ſtory ſo oddly, and brought it down ſo low, that beſides ancient records in great numbers, there might be thouſands of living witneſſes, who could contradict it, and expoſe it as a ſhameful impoſture.

The arians, after them, in the fourth century, claimed tradition, equally with the catholics, but not with equal reaſon. They pretended to derive their doctrine down by the fathers that lived before them; particularly, by Origen, and Theognoſtus, and Dionyſius Alexandrinus. But Athanaſius eaſily detected the iniquity of their claim, and effectually confuted it[h].

The macedonians alſo, in their turn, pleaded tradition for their rejecting the divinity of the Holy Ghoſt. But the great St. Baſil laid open the falſity of their pretences that way, and demonſtrated that tradition was on the contrary ſide[i]. Afterwards, (A. D. 383.) when both they and

[g] Euſeb. Eccleſ. Hiſt. lib. v. C. 28.

[h] Athanaſ. de Decret. Synod. Nic. p. 230, &c. de Sententia Dionyſii, 243, &c.

[i] Baſil de Spiritu Sancto.

and the arians were ſolemnly called upon, and aſked if they would admit the common ſuffrage of the ancients, and be concluded by it; they ſhrunk, and would not ſtand the teſt, chuſing rather to reſt the iſſue of the cauſe upon logical diſputation[k], their uſual refuge, and which they thought their ſafeſt retreat. It ſeldom happens, but that thoſe who make falſe pretences to antiquity, do by their own conduct, (by their evading, or ſhifting when preſſed, or ſome other as ſignificant marks) betray their own cauſe; inſomuch that a ſtander by, of ordinary ſagacity, may often, without entering into the heart of the diſpute, give a ſhrewd conjecture how the caſe ſtands. Having conſidered ſome of the moſt noted inſtances of unjuſtifiable claims among the ancients, let us next deſcend to modern, for farther illuſtration of what we are upon.

The romaniſts are great pretenders to catholic tradition, or primitive antiquity. And yet the fact is ſo full and plain againſt them, that we can point out to them in every age, when, and where, and how every corruption almoſt commenced, and every innovation crept in[l]: or can prove at leaſt, that it was not from the

[k] Socrat. Eccleſ. Hiſtor. L. v. C. 10.
Sozom. E. Hiſt. L. vii. C. 12.
See my ſecond Defence, Præf. p. 13, &c.

[l] See more particularly Biſhop Bull's Anſwer to the Biſhop of Meaux; and Biſhop Stillingfleet's Council of Trent examined and diſproved by catholic tradition: A. D. 1688. Dr. Whitby's Treatiſe of Tradition, A. D. 1688. Payne on the ſixth note of the church, A. D. 1687.

the beginning. And it gives ground for ſuſpicion, that they are themſelves conſcious of the nullity of their claim, when they decline fair diſputation. They ſcreen themſelves under modern infallibility, and take ſanctuary commonly in their own authority, as ſole judges of every thing, rather than reſt the iſſue of the cauſe upon a ſtrict and fair enquiry into ancient fact. I may further add, that it can ſcarce be thought a very difficult matter, to diſcern how antiquity ſtands, as to that controverſy, when a ſingle writer of our own (our excellent Biſhop Jewel) was not afraid, though a very modeſt man, to challenge them publicly upon a great many articles, twenty-ſeven in number, and to give them ſix whole centuries to look out in, only to produce any one ſufficient ſentence out of any old catholic doctor or father, or general council, that ſhould be found to declare clearly and plainly on their ſide, in any of the ſaid articles. He made the challenge, and upon trial was ſufficient to ſtand his ground[m]. The like challenges, with reſpect to the firſt three or four centuries, have been offered by others[n], and may be eaſily maintained by any man of competent learning, or

[m] Fidem fecerint vel ſolius Magnæ Britanniæ veſtræ, vel etiam noſtræ, tot theologi ſummi: ante omnes κτημάλιον illud hominis, Joannes Juellus, Antiſtes Sariſburienſis. Quis enim e conciliis vel doctoribus, quotquot primis fuere annis ſexcentis, non animoſius modo, ſed doctius quoque, vel felicius impugnavit adverſarios? Non defuere quidem quibus hoc diſputandi genus minus probaretur, ſed præſtantiſſimi etiam Whitakeri judicio, Timidiores hi fuere quam neceſſe erat. Ger. Voſſ. ad Forbeſ.

[n] See Dr. Hicks's Letters to a popiſh Prieſt, p. 188, 189.

or judgment. So little difficulty is there in tracing tradition, or in diſtinguiſhing pretence from reality. Wherefore one can ſcarce forbear lamenting, that ſo able a writer as Daille ſhould ſpend the pains he did to depreciate the uſe and value of the fathers, only for fear the romaniſts ſhould take advantage of them[o]. He wanted at that time either the ſpirit, or the penetration of Jewel. Otherwiſe he might have conſidered, that the proteſtant cauſe could not deſire any fairer or greater advantage, than to join iſſue upon the point of genuine antiquity, and to be concluded by it. Indeed, it ſeems, that he did perceive it afterwards, and made very good uſe of it, when years and experience had more inlarged his views[p].

The modern ſocinians, though their way has been for the moſt part, to reject antiquity, or to undervalue it, (finding it run againſt them) have yet many of them, and of late more eſpecially, thought it policy to ſet up a claim to tradition, deducing it from the apoſtles, by the ebionites and nazaræans (whom they ignorantly, or artfully confound) down as far as to the days of Juſtin Martyr, where they are pleaſed to imagine a break in the deſcent, making him the firſt innovator. The ſtory is better laid, than that of their predeceſſors the artemonians, before mentioned. For they confine us within fifty years from the apoſtolical

[o] See his epiſtle dedicatory prefixed to his Right Uſe of the Fathers. As alſo, his Preface to the ſame.

[p] Vid. Scrivener in Præfat. Zornius, p. 666.

lical age; and they know that we have but few records, within that compaſs, to confute their tale by. However, by laying all our evidences together, and making the beſt of them, means have been found to demonſtrate[q], ſo far as a matter of fact, can be demonſtrated, the falſity and nullity of their pretended tradition. And indeed, it muſt look very odd, at firſt ſight, to every conſidering man, that a tradition from the apoſtles ſhould be brought down by ebionites, men condemned by all the apoſtolical churches; nay, and by the apoſtles themſelves, as may appear from what I have offered above.

There remain now only the modern arians to be ſpoken to. Some of whom do with great aſſurance lay claim to ancient tradition; while others fluctuate and heſitate upon it, as upon a point which they neither know how to abide by, nor how to give up. As to thoſe who put on the greateſt aſſurance, it is a ſtrong preſumption of their conſciouſneſs of ſomething wrong, that they are unwilling to acquieſce in the canonical ſcriptures, without ſuperadding another goſpel to them, a new book of conſtitutions, ſpurious and interpolated pieces of the third, fourth and fifth centuries[r]: which, whatever elſe they be, are undoubtedly no part of the oracles of God. Another circumſtance, which looks ſuſpicious, is, that this

[q] Bull. Primitiva et Apoſtolica Traditio, per tot. Moſheim Vindic. Antiq. cont. Joan. Toland. Stillingfleet Vindic. of the Trin. C. 3. p. 15, &c.

[r] See Mr. Turner on the Apoſtolical Conſtitutions. Printed A. D. 1715.

this pretended tradition is confined within two centuries. The reaſon is, becauſe the evidences afterwards come in too full and ſtrong to be eluded. Beſides that Clemens of Alexandria, and Tertullian, who are both within the compaſs, but happen to ſpeak too broad and clear, are excluded from giving their teſtimony[s]. And yet, after all, even thoſe which are taken in, as Juſtin, Irenæus, Athenagoras, &c. furniſh out evidence enough to confute the ill contrived claim, and to prove it a figment.

As to other more prudent and cautious abettors of the ſame cauſe, though they decline not teſtimonies from the ancients, when any can be made to look favourable to that ſide, yet they endeavour, more ways than one, to ſink the value of antiquity, and to leſſen the juſt eſteem which we ought to have for it. The teſtimonies of the ancients are depreciated under the low name of bare illuſtrations[t], becauſe they are not proofs in the higheſt ſenſe, as the ſcriptures themſelves are. But there is a medium between proofs in that ſtrongeſt ſenſe, and mere illuſtrations. For ſubordinate proofs of the church's doctrine from the beginning, drawn from church writers, are proofs of ſomething (though not foundations of our faith) proofs in the moral kind, ſecond only to ſcripture[u], and ſuch as ought at

[s] Whiſton, Primitive Chriſtianity revived, Vol. iv. p. 2. Compare Grabe's Inſtances of Defects, &c. p. 8, &c.

[t] Clarke's Script. Doctr. Introduct. p. 24. third edit.

[u] See my firſt Defence, p. 453.
Second Defence, p. 487, &c. alias p. 492, &c.
See alſo above, p. 379.

at leaſt to have a negative, ſo far as concerns fundamentals, in the interpretation of ſcripture.

Another inſtance of the low eſteem which thoſe gentlemen have of the fathers, is ſeen in this, that while they quote paſſages from them, ſuch as they can moſt eaſily warp to their own hypotheſis, yet they undertake not, ſo far as I have obſerved, to reconcile the other numerous paſſages, or to make the fathers, upon the whole, conſiſtent evidences on their ſide, as we do ours. This, I ſay, is another preſumptive argument that they are themſelves, in ſome meaſure, conſcious how precarious and unſupported their claims to antiquity are.

I may add, that ſome amongſt them have taken all poſſible pains to expoſe the fathers to the utmoſt*, on purpoſe to render their ſuffrage, in this cauſe, uſeleſs and inſignificant. A plain ſign that they take them not for friends, ſince they do not uſe them like friends. From this ſingle mark, a man of ordinary diſcernment may competently judge (without looking farther) whom the fathers belong to, as Solomon, by a like direction, knew whoſe was the child.

Enough hath been ſaid to ſhew, that it is no ſuch very difficult matter, as ſome would repreſent, to judge between the claimants, or to diſtinguiſh the rightful poſſeſſor from the falſe challenger.

* Dr. Whitby's Diſſertation, [de Scripturar. Interpret.] is intirely on this ſubject, and written with that view.

challenger. I believe, it is, at leaſt, as eaſy (generally ſpeaking) as it is to judge in a critical way upon texts. For that is what the plaineſt texts imaginable muſt at length be brought to[y], if one has a ſubtle adverſary to deal with, who has learned to play the whole game. Much learning commonly will be ſpent on both ſides, before the cleareſt cauſe can be brought to a full hearing, and argued quite through. I need but inſtance in the rounds which Artemonius has led us, upon John i. 1. mentioned above.

X. There is one objection more, which though ſufficiently obviated already, may yet perhaps deſerve to have ſomething more diſtinctly ſaid to it in this place. It is pleaded, that men ought to judge for themſelves, to make uſe of their own underſtandings, and to admit no human authorities. I allow the plea. But, I preſume, it is not hereby meant, that we ſhould receive no human explications of texts; for then we muſt receive none at all. If I interpret ſcripture for myſelf, my explication is human to me: or elſe, how it ſhould become human to others who may may take it of me, I do not ſee. No doubt but Socinus's, or Crellius's, or Enjedine's explications were human, as it is certain that many of them were falſe. And therefore they that talk in

[y] Le Clerc very well obſerves, that, "to men governed by "their paſſions, and conceited of their prejudices, the moſt evi- "dent things in the world are obſcure; and that there is no law "ſo clear, but a wrangler may raiſe a thouſand difficulties "about it." Le Clerc. Cauſes of Incredulity, p. 172.

in the general againſt all human explications, ſeem not to conſider what they ſay, or they forget themſelves to be men.

As to authority, in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe, I do not know that the fathers have any over us. They are all dead men. Therefore we urge not their authority, but their teſtimony, their ſuffrage, their judgment, as carrying great force of reaſon with it; and reaſon we ſhould all ſubmit to[z]. Taking them in here, as lights or helps, is doing what is reaſonable, and uſing our own underſtanding in the beſt manner, and to the beſt purpoſes. It is judging rightly for ourſelves. If it were not ſo, what prudent man would adviſe it, or endeavour to perſuade others to it? But, ſays an objector, do not you follow the fathers? Yes, as far as reaſon requires, and no farther; therefore this is following our own reaſon. And he that deſerts the fathers in this inſtance, deſerts himſelf

[z] "Reaſon is that faculty, whereby a man muſt judge of "every thing: nor can a man believe any thing except he have "ſome reaſon for it; whether that reaſon be a deduction "from the light of nature, or a branch of divine revelation "in the oracles of holy ſcripture, or the general interpreta-"tion of genuine antiquity, or the propoſal of our own church "conſentaneous thereto, or laſtly, the reſult of ſome, or all of "theſe; for he that will rightly make uſe of his reaſon, muſt "take all that is reaſonable into conſideration. And it is ad-"mirable to conſider how the ſame concluſions do naturally flow "from all theſe ſeveral principles: and what, in the faithful "uſe of the faculties that God hath given, men have believed "for true, doth excellently agree with that revelation that God "hath exhibited in the ſcripture; and the doctrine of the "ancient church with them both." New Sect of Latitude men, in the Phœnix, Vol. ii. p. 706. written A. D. 1662.

ſelf and his own reaſon. Their ſentiments, ſo ancient, ſo univerſal, carry the force of an argument[a] along with them, and a very ſtrong argument too, all things conſidered[b]. Therefore the being conducted by thoſe ſentiments, along with ſcripture, is the ſame thing with being convinced or perſuaded by argument; which is hearkening to right reaſon, which is ſubmitting to God (who gave us reaſon for our guide) and not to human authority. It is following the ſafeſt and beſt light which divine providence has graciouſly afforded us. For, as a great and good prelate has obſerved, "The general tradition of the church, "next to ſcripture, is the beſt and ſureſt confir-

"mation

[a] "It is a good argument for us to follow ſuch an opinion, "becauſe it is made ſacred by the authority of councils and "eccleſiaſtical tradition. And ſometimes it is the beſt reaſon "we have in a queſtion; and then it is to be ſtrictly followed. "But there may be alſo at other times a reaſon greater than it, "that ſpeaks againſt it; and then the authority muſt not carry "it. But then the difference is not between reaſon and autho-"rity, but between this reaſon and that; which is greater. "For authority is a very good reaſon, and is to prevail, unleſs "a ſtronger comes and diſarms it, and then it muſt give place. "So that in this queſtion, by reaſon I do not mean a diſtinct "topic, but a tranſcendent that runs through all topics." Taylor's Liberty of Propheſying, Sect. x. p. 220.

[b] "Since we know what the catholic faith was, and how "the catholic fathers expounded ſcripture, if the words of "ſcripture will naturally and eaſily admit that ſenſe (much "more if they will not admit any other ſenſe, without great "force and violence) let any man judge which is moſt ſafe and "reaſonable, to expound ſcripture as the catholic faith and "catholic fathers expound it, and as ſcripture moſt eaſily and "naturally expounds itſelf, or to force new ſenſes and old "hereſies upon ſcripture, which the catholic church has always "rejected and condemned." Sherlock. Preſent State of Soc. Controv. p. 80.

" mation of this great point now in queſtion
" between us; and that which gives us the
" greateſt and trueſt light for the right un-
" derſtanding of the true ſenſe and meaning
" of ſcripture, not only in this, but in moſt
" other important doctrines of the chriſtian re-
" ligion[c]."

What I have ſaid appears ſufficient to ſhew that the taking the ancients in, for the aſſiſting or informing our judgments in this queſtion, is judging for ourſelves in the moſt rational way that can be thought on. Nevertheleſs, I take the liberty to obſerve, that thoſe who talk moſt of mens uſing their own underſtandings, often mean little by it, but to get the direction of their faith and conſciences to themſelves, or to make them change a reaſonable veneration of the ancients, for a blind admiration of ſome modern preceptors. They very well know, that the generality of mankind, (ſuch as read little, and think leſs) will ſcarce judge for themſelves at all, except it be as to the choice of ſome leader, or leaders, whom they may ſuppoſe it ſafeſt to confide in. And it is among ſuch as theſe, commonly that new teachers ſeek proſelytes; obtruding themſelves as guides, and at the ſame time aſſuring them that they need no guides. Which, in effect, is leading them about what way ſoever they pleaſe, artfully telling them that they go by themſelves, when in truth,

[c] Archbiſhop Tillotſon's Vol. i. Serm. xliv. p. 456. fol. edit.

truth, they only change their leaders. To ſay all at once, the true and the whole meaning of the incredible pains which ſome perſons have taken to ſet the fathers aſide, has been generally neither more nor leſs than this; to remove as much of the evidence which ſtands againſt them, as they can with any decency attempt to remove. They cannot, they dare not pretend to throw off ſcripture itſelf, unleſs they were reſolved to throw up chriſtianity with it, and to declare openly for infidelity. But there may be colours invented for throwing off the fathers; and therefore thus far they can proceed, in oppoſing the ancient faith, and at the ſame time ſave appearances. There lies the whole of this matter, as I conceive, generally ſpeaking. Otherwiſe, it is manifeſtly againſt all ſenſe and reaſon to make the leaſt queſtion either of the uſe, or the value of eccleſiaſtical antiquity.

The ſum of what I have been endeavouring through this whole chapter, is, that ſcripture and antiquity, (under the conduct of right reaſon) are what we ought to abide by, for the ſettling points of doctrine. I have not put the caſe of ſcripture and antiquity interfering, or claſhing with each other: becauſe it is a caſe which never will appear in points of importance, ſuch as that is which we are now upon. However, as to the general caſe, we may ſay, that thoſe two ought always to go together, and to coincide with each other, and when they do ſo, they ſtand the firmer in their united ſtrength. But if ever they claſh, or appear to claſh, then undoubtedly there is

an error ſomewhere, like as when two accountants vary in caſting up the main ſum. In ſuch a caſe, a wiſe man will not reſt ſatisfied (if the the thing be of moment) till he finds out, if poſſible, the reaſon of the difference, and diſcovers where the error lies. For, either it muſt lie on the ſcripture ſide (when a man takes that for ſcripture which is not ſcripture, or that for true interpretation which is not true interpretation) or it muſt lie on the tradition ſide, through ſome miſreport made of the ancients, or ſome miſtake of the ancients themſelves. Then the queſtion will be, which of the two ſuppoſitions is moſt likely to be true in that inſtance. And the reſolution at length muſt turn upon a due weighing and conſidering all circumſtances, with the reaſons offered here and there, and then ballancing the whole account.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Shewing, that what has been lately offered in favour of the arian interpretation of John i. 1, 2. *and of* Heb. i. *is of no force or validity.*

THE author of "Sober and charitable Diſ-"quiſition," had been pleaſed to ſay, "That "an honeſt mind, inquiſitive after truth, and "willing to weigh the matter impartially, and to "examine the evidence on both ſides thoroughly, "might be long in ſuſpence before he could de-"termine to his full ſatisfaction: and that ſeveral "men of equal ſenſe, learning, capacity, probity, "and piety, may after ſuch examination make "different determinations upon the matter[a]." He refers to his appendix for proof, which appendix contains two oppoſite views of John i. 1. and of Hebr. i. I would here previouſly remark ſomething of his manner of wording the thing, and then proceed. Might it not as well have been ſaid, that there is as much reaſon on one ſide of the queſtion, as there is on the other? Why ſhould an invidious turn be given to what we are doing, that if we maintain our point, and inſiſt upon it as true and juſt, it ſhall be interpreted to be as much as ſaying, that our adverſaries have not equal ſenſe, learning, &c. with ourſelves? We deſign not, we deſire not to make any ſuch

[a] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 42, 43.

ſuch compariſons. We leave perſons out of the queſtion, deſiring only to come to the truth of things. It is natural for many to admire the founders of their ſect, or the leading advocates of their party[b]. And it might look like rudeneſs, to ſay a word reflecting on their ſenſe, learning, capacity, or probity. Neither indeed is there any occaſion for detracting from their general character, ſince it is certain that men of as great ſenſe, learning, and piety, to all outward appearances, as any in their times, have ſometimes fallen into hereſy[c], (as they might into any other great ſin) and have perverted the goſpel of Chriſt: *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take heed leſt he fall.* It is a wrong way to judge of faith by the men[d], rather than of the men by their faith, and conduct. There is no ſenſe however in going againſt truth, no learning in contradicting the wiſdom of heaven, no piety nor probity in departing from God. Perſons muſt be tried by the rule, and not the rule by their

[b] Magnus profecto neſcio quis ſignatur magiſter, et tantæ ſcientiæ qui ſectatoribus propriis non ſolum quæ humana ſunt noſſe, verum etiam quæ ſupra hominem ſunt prænoſcere poſſe videatur; quales fere diſcipuli ſui jactitant fuiſſe Valentinum, Donatum, Photinum, Apollinarem, cæteroſque ejuſmodi. Vincent. Lirinenſ. C. 15.

[c] See Addenda, p. 514.

[d] Solent quidem iſti infirmiores etiam de quibuſdam perſonis ab hæreſi captis ædificari in ruinam; quare ille vel ille fideliſſimi et uſitatiſſimi in eccleſiâ, in illam partem tranſierunt? Quis, hoc dicens, non ipſe ſibi reſpondet, neque prudentes, neque fideles, neque uſitatos æſtimandos, quos hæreſes potuerint demutare. Tertull. Præſcript. C. iii.

their character, be it otherwiſe ever ſo high or commendable[d]. Men may behave unworthy of themſelves: and God permits even wiſe men, and good men (as Solomon and David) ſometimes to fall, when they grow ſecure or aſſuming; for a puniſhment to them, and for a trial to others[e], and for a warning to all, that they may learn to be humble, and watchful, and not to truſt ſo much to their own worth, or parts, as to their care and circumſpection, and God's bleſſing upon it.

Thus much being premiſed for the taking off all undue admiration of any man's perſon, and for the preventing any invidious compariſons, (foreign and uſeleſs to the point in hand) as well as for the putting the cauſe upon a right iſſue; I now proceed to examine the merits of the debate between the arians and the athanaſians, ſo far as concerns John i. 1. and Hebr. i. 10.

I. The

[d] Quid ergo ſi epiſcopus, ſi diaconus, ſi vidua, ſi virgo, ſi doctor, ſi etiam martyr lapſus a regulâ fuerit, ideo hæreſes veritatem videbuntur obtinere? ex perſonis probamus fidem, an ex fide perſonas? Nemo ſapiens eſt niſi fidelis, nemo major niſi chriſtianus; nemo autem Chriſtianus, niſi qui ad finem perſeveraverit. Tertul. Præſcript. C. 3.

[e] Luce clarius aperta cauſa eſt, cur interdum divina providentia quoſdam eccleſiarum magiſtros nova quædam dogmata prædicare patiatur: *ut tentet vos*, inquit, *Dominus Deus veſter*. Deut. xiii. 3. Et profecto magna tentatio eſt, cum ille quem tu prophetam, quem prophetarum diſcipulum, quem doctorem, et adſertorem veritatis putes, quem ſummâ veneratione et amore complexus ſis, is ſubito latenter noxios ſubinducat errores; quos nec cito deprehendere valeas, dum antiqui magiſterii duceris præjudicio; nec facile damnare fas ducas, dum magiſtri veteris præpediris affectu. Vincent. Lirin. C. 15.

I. The author of "Sober and charitable Diſ-"quiſition" undertook to repreſent the athanaſian and arian conſtructions of John i. 1. fairly and impartially, as indeed common equity and juſtice required. He begins with the athanaſian. But how ſoon does he diſcover marks of partiality, and unequal dealing? He ſmooths over the arian conſtruction with all affectionate tenderneſs, covering even its real and greateſt faults, as we ſhall ſee preſently. But does he ſhew any favour at all to the other? When he is interpreting for us, THE WORD WAS GOD, he preſently throws in, "The ſelfſame being with the Father[g]." He muſt have known how ambiguous, and equivocal[h] that expreſſion of ſelfſame being is, and that in one ſenſe of it, it is not our doctrine, but the ſabellian hereſy. Might it not therefore have ſufficed to have ſaid, the "ſame God with the Father, or one God with "the Father?" That is a doctrine, which we inviolably maintain and adhere to, becauſe ſcripture forbids us to admit two adorable Gods. As to the queſtion about calling them the ſelfſame being, it is a queſtion about a name, or a phraſe, and a ſcholaſtic queſtion, invented ſeveral ages after our doctrine had ſtood ſecure, and independent of it. And when the ſchoolmen undertook to conſider this verbal affair (for it is no more) they either rejected, or admitted the expreſſion, with proper diſtinctions;

[g] Sober and charitable Diſquiſition, p. 51.
[h] See my firſt Defence, p. 167, 328.

tions; not ſcrupling to ſay "tres res," or "tria entia relativa," always meaning that the union was too cloſe to admit of the name of beings in the plural[i], without a ſoftening epithet: and therefore being of being, or ſubſtance of ſubſtance (not beings, or ſubſtances) has been the catholic language[k]. Let but thoſe who object ſameneſs of being, define the terms, and tell us what conſtitutes ſameneſs, and then it will be very eaſy to tell them how far we ſuppoſe the three perſons to be the ſame being. All the difficulties about ſameneſs, or individual, or numerical, &c. reſolve only into this, that we know not preciſely, in all caſes, what to call ſame, individual, numerical, and the like. The general notion of the Trinity is clear, but the meaning of thoſe terms is looſe, confuſe, and undeterminate. So that the perplexity (if there be any) lies not in the thing, but in ſome dark names, which many uſe without any certain meaning. Say but what thoſe words or names preciſely ſignify, and it will be very eaſy to determine how far they are applicable to the true notion of the Trinity. But to proceed.

I have obſerved how unfairly the gentleman has dealt with our doctrine. Let us next take notice how tenderly he deals with the arian conſtruction of the ſame words. *The Word was God*, viz. "a divine perſon, a moſt "godlike

[i] See my ſecond Defence, Q. xxiii. p. 452—460. 2d. edit.
[k] See my farther Vindic. p. 21. 54

"godlike being[k]." He ſhould have ſaid, another God, a creature of the great God[l], which is their plain and certain meaning; though they are very reſerved and baſhful in the wording of that article, as they have always been, dreading to ſpeak it out in broad terms. However, if God the Son be God, as the text plainly ſays, he muſt be either another God, or one God with the Father. So that if our doctrine of one God be rejected, two Gods is the conſequence directly. Beſides, ſince they muſt own, and do own, that he was God before the world was made, they ſhould tell us, whether he was God by nature, or by office. He had no office ſo early, that I know of. It ſeems then, he was God by nature. So, there are two Gods by nature upon the arian principles. Therefore let any ſober chriſtian judge, which is the true interpretation of the text, theirs or ours, thus far. Now let us proceed.

The word WAS IN THE BEGINNING WITH GOD. That is, ſay we, before any thing was made. And we ſay it for theſe two plain reaſons. Becauſe the order of the ſentence requires it, ſince the account of the creation follows after; and becauſe all things were made by the word: therefore he was before all creatures. The arian conſtruction, as this gentleman repreſents it[m], is, IN THE BEGINNING, *when God created the*

[k] Sober and charitable Diſquiſition, p. 54.
[l] See my firſt and ſecond Defence, Q. v.
[m] Ibid. p. 54, 55.

the heaven and the earth. Now, if heaven and earth are words which ſignify all creatures, we admit the expoſition. But if they mean any thing leſs, they are ſhort of St. John's expoſition of his own phraſe, which he interprets to mean, all things that ever were made, that is, all creatures.

ALL THINGS WERE MADE BY HIM, AND WITHOUT HIM WAS NOT ANY THING MADE THAT WAS MADE[n]. Now, we interpret and ſay, that if all things were made by him, then he himſelf muſt be unmade. And ſince made by him, amounts to declaring him Maker of all creatures (as we ſhall ſee upon Hebr. i. 10.) we again conclude, He is no creature; becauſe a creature creator, if at all reconcilable with reaſon[o], is however utterly irreconcilable with ſcripture,

[n] One may obſerve the force of this text even upon thoſe that came very unwillingly (and upon the whole not ſincerely) into the doctrine it contained, ſince it obliged Eunomius himſelf, one of the groſſer kind of arians, but the ſhrewdeſt man of the ſect, to admit thus much, that Chriſt muſt be as much ſuperior to his creatures, as the maker muſt be to the things he has made; and that he was really inveſted with creative powers by the Father. A remarkable conceſſion, and ſuch as ought to have made a modeſt man renounce all his metaphyſics; which alone hindered him from coming intirely into church principles. The place I ſpeak of, is in his Apologetic (which was anſwered by St. Baſil) and runs as here follows.

Τοσαύτην αὐτῷ νέμομεν ὑπεροχὴν, ὅσην ἔχειν ἀναγκαῖον τῶν ἰδίων ποιημάτων τὸν ποιητήν. Πάντα γὰρ δι' αὐτοῦ γεγενῆσθαι κατὰ τὸν μακάριον Ιωάννην ὁμολογοῦμεν, συναπογενηθείσης ἄνωθεν αὐτῷ τῆς δημιουργικῆς δυνάμεως, ὡς εἶναι θεὸν μονογενῆ πάντων τῶν μετ' αὐτὸν, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ γενομένων. Eunom. Apolog. p. 281. Fabr. Bibl. Græc. L. v. C. 23. Baſil. opp. Tom. i. p. 623. Edit. Bened.

Conf. Baſil. contr. Eunom. L. ii. p. 255. Edit. Bened.

[o] A late ingenious writer argues the point, in a very rational manner

ture, which every where makes creative power the diſtinguiſhing character of God moſt high[p]. The arian conſtruction is, *All* [other] *things were made by Him*, and *without Him was not any thing made that was* [then] *made*. So, by inſerting "other" there, and "then" here; that is, by altering St. John's moſt expreſs, moſt emphatical propoſitions, a new ſenſe is made for him which he had doubly excluded, as far as words could do it. For our conſtruction, we have, 1. Expreſs text. 2. The order and coherence of the ſentence. 3. The tenour of ſcripture, appropriating creative powers to God ſupreme. 4. The reaſon of the thing. For it is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that one creature ſhould create another. 5. The univerſal judgment of the firſt and pureſt ages of the chriſtian church. What is there now, on the other hand, to counterbalance theſe reaſons, or to oblige us to run croſs to ſo many evident marks of a true interpretation? The author of "Sober and "charitable," &c. pleads on the other ſide, that

manner, thus: "Creation, or the bringing a thing into being "which before had none, or was once nothing, is undoubtedly "the proper act of an Almighty or Infinite Power: and, as "muſt be granted, infinite power is an incommunicable attri-"bute or perfection. Beſides, if a power of creating could be "communicated, then the being on which it is conferred, hav-"ing the ſame power, might endue a creature of its own with "ſuch a power; and this creature might make another ſuch "creature, and ſo on in infinitum; which is ſo ſhocking an "abſurdity, that no one can bear the thought or imagination "of it." Eſſay concerning rational Notions, p. 159. printed for W. Innys, 1733.

[p] See my Sermons, p. 91, &c.

that the apoſtle, if he had intended to teach that the Logos was God, creator of all things, might have ſaid it more plainly, and with leſs circumlocution[q]. But we think, St. John has done it in choſen and expreſſive words, and could not have made uſe of better, to expreſs what he intended, all things conſidered[r]. He might have ſaid, adds this gentleman, that "in "God are three perſonal diſtinctions, the Fa-"ther, the Word, and the Spirit." But St. John was wiſer than to teach ſabellianiſm, as it has been ſince called. The bleſſed three are not perſonal diſtinctions, but diſtinct perſons; as is proved from St. John in this very place, becauſe *the Word was with God.*

It is aſked, could either jew or heathen gueſs that he did not mean a diſtinct being[s]? I anſwer, neither jew nor heathen, who knew that St. John believed the Old Teſtament, could be ſo weak as to imagine that he meant to teach another God, or two Gods. However, the chriſtian church are the propereſt interpreters of St. John's meaning. Why muſt jews, or heathens, as ſuch, be appealed to[t], rather than Chriſt's diſciples, for the underſtanding chriſtian doctrine? The objector here twice[u] confounds perſonal

[q] Sober and charitable Diſq. p. 55.
[r] See the whole explained above.
Compare Tillotſon Serm. xliii. Vol. i. Fol. Ed.
[s] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 56.
[t] See my Sermons, p. 36—39.
[u] Ibid. p. 56, 57.

perſonal characters (as he had before done perſonal diſtinctions) with perſons; which is not fair towards our ſide, nor ſo prudent for the other ſide, becauſe it is tacitly confeſſing, that our notion wants to be miſrepreſented, in order to afford ſome colour for diſputing againſt it.

He aſks, why is it doubled over, THE SAME WAS IN THE BEGINNING? To be the more emphatical againſt heretics, or the better to connect the ſentence, and to introduce what follows.

"And why ſo minute, as to inform us, not "one is to be excepted[v]?" Perhaps to foreclose, condemn, and put to ſhame all thoſe who, notwithſtanding ſuch his minuteneſs, would yet be bold enough to foiſt in "other" there, and "then" here, to elude and fruſtrate his meaning. Experience ſhews, that all his guards are uſeful, none ſuperfluous. But if the reader deſires a fuller account, he may pleaſe to look back to what I have ſaid above[w]. I have anſwered all the queſtions. And now let the reader judge, whether they have weight enough to bear down the chriſtian interpretation founded upon the reaſons before recited. Yet the author is pleaſed to recommend the other, in very high terms: "not a word is loſt," in that way, "every "thing has a plain, proper and obvious ſenſe[x]." Is it poſſible? Has the word God, for inſtance, its

[v] Ibid. 57.
[w] See above, p. 256. And Sermons, p. 46, 47.
[x] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 55.

its plain, proper, and obvious ſenſe[y], when it is made to ſignify a godlike creature? And is there not a word loſt, when the very ſtrongeſt expreſſions which the apoſtle could uſe, to exempt the Logos from being one of the things made, are defeated and fruſtrated, by forcing the words "other," and "then," upon him, which he never wrote, and by obtruding a ſenſe, which, it is likely, he abhorred? Have the words, *all things*, and *was not any thing*, their plain and obvious ſenſe aſſigned them, when they are violently wreſted from their abſolute meaning to a limited one; and are arbitarily clogged with reſerves and reſtrictions, though, according to the plain letter, and other plain circumſtances, they form univerſal propoſitions, affirmative and negative? If ſuch liberties as theſe are to be taken with plain texts, and without any apparent neceſſity, it is in vain to preſcribe any ſober rules of interpretation, or to attempt to prove any thing from dead writings. But if words can be of any weight or ſignificancy, theſe texts of St. John are plainly definitive on our ſide of the queſtion: which I have ſhewn more at large elſewhere[z]. Or if the reader pleaſes to peruſe profeſſor Franck's treatiſe, lately tranſlated from the German into Engliſh[a], he

[y] As to the ſtrict ſenſe of the word God, in that place, ſee my Sermons, p. 35, 36.

[z] Sermons the firſt, ſecond and third, at Lady Moyer's Lecture.

[a] Franck's Nucleus, or Chriſt the Sum and Subſtance of Scripture, p. 93—173.

he will there find the divinity of our bleſſed Lord ſolidly demonſtrated by ſix ſeveral arguments drawn from this ſingle chapter, but compared with other texts.

I may over and above advance one more argument, fairly deducible from the diſtreſs which the impugners of Chriſt's divinity have all along been in, with relation to this proeme of St. John, and the difficulties they have lain under in contriving to evade its force. The Alogi[b], (who appear to have been a branch of the ebionites) as alſo Theodotus[c], took the ſhort and plain way, which was to reject the whole goſpel, as not being of St. John's inditing.

The arians were ſo diſtreſſed with the ſame paſſages, that they knew not how to evade them but by a new invention of a two fold Logos[d], one conſidered as an attribute, quality, or operation of God (after the ſabellian way) the other conſidered as a creature, made by the former. And here they were under a dilemma which they could never get clear of. For either all things were made by the Logos in the former ſenſe, and then how was the Logos MADE FLESH? Or all things were made by the Logos in the latter ſenſe, created by a creature, who muſt alſo, if the word *all* be ſtriſtly taken, have created himſelf; which is palpably abſurd. It ſeems, that they inclined

[b] Epiphan. Hær. L. i. 3. Philaſtr. Hær. lx. Damaſcen. Hær. 31.

[c] Epiphan. Hær. L. iv. 1.

[d] Vid. Athanaſii Opp. 260, 282, 398, 409, 413, 503, 505, 620. Edit. Bened.

inclined moſt to the former: and if we may truſt to Anaſtaſius Sinaita, that was the very conſtruction which Arius himſelf eſpouſed[e].

Next, let us inquire, whether the modern impugners of Chriſt's divinity have ſucceeded any better, or whether they alſo have not betrayed the like confuſion and diſtreſs. I need not ſay any thing of Socinus's wild and extravagant interpretation, which has long been exploded by his own diſciples, and which ſtands now only as a monument of the wonderful virtue of ſtrong prejudices, and ſelf admiration. Zwicker came after, and he took the ſurer way, which was to deny the authenticity of the proeme, and to ſtrike it out of the canon of the New Teſtament. Artemonius (aliàs Sam. Crellius) is a later inſtance, and which comes as fully up to my purpoſe. He has been moving heaven and earth (as I have before[f] intimated) to perſuade us into a different reading of one of the critical words in St. John, on which much depends. He has ranſacked all antiquity[g] for authorities to juſtify an alteration; and becauſe he could find none, he has made as many as

[e] Arius's interpretation of the place, according to Anaſtaſius in his Hodegus, runs thus:

Καλῶς εἶπεν ὁ Ιωάννης, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, τοῦτ' ἐστι τὸ ῥῆμα τοῦ θεοῦ· οὐ γὰρ εἶπεν, ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ υἱὸς, ἀλλ' ὁ λόγος ὁ προφορικὸς τοῦ θεοῦ. Anaſtaſ. Hodeg. p. 330.

[f] See above, p. 296.

[g] Initium Evangelii S. Joannes ex antiquitate eccleſiaſticâ reſtitutum. Per L. M. Artemonium. A. D. 1726.

as he pleaſed, by mere dint of wit and fancy. Certainly St. John had ſome direction extraordinary, or was otherwiſe a very ſagacious perſon, that, after the utmoſt improvements made in the art of chicanery, and wire drawing of words, yet nothing can effectually do the buſineſs, even at this day, but altering the text; though, after all, there is no manner of countenance from any copies for doing it. One thing however I may obſerve of Artemonius, which as it ſhews his acuteneſs, betrays at the ſame time a conſciouſneſs, or a tacit acknowledgment, that we are in the right to interpret the word God in the ſtrict ſenſe, as we do. He argues, that it was by no means proper, that the word ſhould be called God, leſt that appellation, taken with ſo many other plauſible circumſtances, ſhould lead men into a ſnare, and make them believe Chriſt to be *God moſt High*[h]. Now, what is this but confeſſing, that ſuch an inference is natural and obvious, upon the ſuppoſition that Chriſt is called God in ſcripture? He ſaw the force of it, and the inevitable neceſſity we are under of ſo interpreting. And that conſideration made him take ſuch immenſe, but fruitleſs pains, to defeat all thoſe texts where Chriſt is expreſsly called God. But if that ſingle conſideration ſtruck this gentleman in ſo ſenſible a manner, what can we think of all the other texts, which over and above aſcribe to Chriſt divine perfections, and divine

[h] Artemonius, Par. ii. p. 295.

divine worſhip alſo? It is plain, that Artemonius could not have been againſt us, had he not ſet out at firſt upon a falſe principle, that human imagination is the meaſure of divine truths.

II. From John i. I now paſs on to Hebr. i. in order to examine whether what we find there, be not altogether as definitive as the former. Here the author of "Sober and charitable," &c. undertakes to give a fair and impartial account of both parties. Notwithſtanding which, in his very firſt ſetting out, he repreſents us as direct and manifeſt ſabellians, againſt all reaſon and juſtice, and common equity. He puts theſe words upon us, as expreſſing our ſenſe: "God "may be ſaid to make all things by his Son, "as a man to underſtand by his reaſon[1]." This is not our way of ſpeaking, or thinking, on the ſubject, (it was Sabellius's, it was Arius's) and therefore ought not to be reported as ours. For, what if we do not call Father and Son two ſubſtances (the union being too cloſe to admit of ſuch expreſſions) yet we ſcruple not to ſay, ſubſtance of ſubſtance, like as God of God. We contrive our expreſſions ſo as to ſuit the ſcripture idea of a real diſtinction without diviſion, and of an union alſo without confuſion. We maintain, that there may be a real diverſity conſiſtent with real unity, and that what is multiple in one reſpect, may be one in another.

[1] Sober and charitable Diſquiſition, p. 59.

ther. And thus we ſtand clear of ſabellianiſm on one hand, ſo likewiſe of tritheiſm on the other[k]. The author proceeds to ſet forth[l] a ſummary of our reaſonings upon Hebr. i. And he has indeed brought together a great deal more than can ever be fairly anſwered. But without replying to what was offered on our ſide, and without ſo much as endeavouring to ſhew how the force of thoſe many ſtrong expreſſions can be evaded, or the words accounted for, he contents himſelf barely with repreſenting the pleadings on the other ſide, producing our antagoniſts not as reſpondents, but opponents only. But, ſuppoſing that the adverſaries had ever ſo much to urge in that way, yet unleſs they could reconcile it with the words of the texts, and give a clear account of the whole, it is doing the work by halves, and can, at moſt, be eſteemed but as a lame defence. However, by this means, all our arguments from Hebr. i. are left ſtanding in full force, and it remains only that we remove objections, to clear the whole thing. Two conſiderations are ſuggeſted by this author; firſt, that the chapter here under enquiry, makes the Son another being from God; ſecondly, it makes him alſo an inferior being[m]. Let us now examine, how theſe pretences are ſupported.

1. As

[k] See my Defence, Q. xxii. p. 330. &c. Second Defence, p. 459, &c. 2d Ed. Farther Vindication, p. 56, 57, 58, 59.

[l] Sober and charitable Diſquiſition, p. 59—65.

[m] Ibid. p. 66.

1. As to the firſt ſuggeſtion, it is to be obſerved, that it amounts only to a metaphyſical ſubtlety about being and perſon, as if the words were convertible terms; which though it has been tried a thouſand times over, could never yet be made out. But here we may perceive, who they are that run into metaphyſical and logical niceties, to evade plain words of ſcripture[n], inſtead of keeping cloſe to ſacred writ, and what it teaches in full and expreſs terms. But I would further remark, though I have occaſionally hinted it before, that all this diſcourſe about being and perſon is foreign, and not pertinent; becauſe if both theſe terms were thrown out, our doctrine would ſtand juſt as before, independent of them, and very intelligible without them. So it ſtood for above 150 years, before perſon was heard of in it; and it was later before being was mentioned. Therefore, if all the objection be againſt thoſe, however innocent, expreſſions, let the objectors drop the names, and accept the thing. They may expreſs the doctrine thus, if they pleaſe; that the Father is God, the Son God, the Holy Ghoſt God, and all one God; and yet the Father is not the Son, nor Holy Ghoſt, nor either of them the Father. This is plainly the doctrine of ſcripture, let them expreſs it in what terms they pleaſe.

[n] How common and conſtant the practice is, I have often obſerved elſewhere.

Defence, Q. xxii. p. 303, 327, 480.

Second Defence, p. 4, 68, 113, 149, 225, 335, 430, 439, 489, 516, 519, 525. 2d Edit.

pleaſe. Each is Jehovah, and yet they are not three Jehovahs. This is truth, (if ſcripture can prove a truth) and we need no more. But if any one has a mind to expreſs this doctrine in ſuch words as Juſtin Martyr, and Athenagoras, and Irenæus, and Theophilus, and Clemens Alexandrinus expreſſed it in (before perſon or being was heard of[o]) he is at liberty as to words, while he admits the ſenſe. For we are not bound down to names, but to things. Theſe conſiderations premiſed, I now proceed with our author.

He objects, that the Son is diſtinguiſhed from God[p]. From God the Father, he means. And ſo he ſhould be, becauſe God the Son is not God the Father. He adds, if God means God the Father, "He only muſt be God, for he ſays "of himſelf, He is GOD ALONE." Here I might run out into a particular explication of what concerns excluſive terms. But becauſe I have often done it before, I chuſe to refer[q]. But in the mean while, if the excluſive terms are ſo ſtrict, how come the arians off with their doctrine of two Gods? We can give a good reaſon why the excluſive terms ſhould yet tacitly ſuppoſe and include what ſo intimately belongs to God. But certainly all creatures are for ever excluded.

The

[o] See my ſecond Defence, p. 449. alias 454.

[p] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 66.

[q] Sermon iv. per tot. Second Defence, 31, 56, 57, 84, 99, 198, 390. Edit. 2d. alias 26, 51, 52, 79, 94, 193, 385. Third Defence, or farther Vindication, p. 33.

The author goes on to obſerve, that Father and Son muſt be two things[r]. One would hope, he does not mean two Gods, equal or unequal. As to any thing elſe, we are unconcerned; we allow that the Father is not the Son, and ſo vice verſa. He ſays further, the Son, is "not the ſelf ſame individual ſubſtance[s]." Here again the reader may obſerve, what kind of arguments we are attacked with. No regard had to the proper, obvious, natural ſenſe of the texts, but all the diſpute is made to turn upon logical niceties, or metaphyſical ſubtleties about the nature of things confeſſedly myſterious, or rather upon the meaning of technical terms and names, ſuch as individual[t], &c. It is ſufficient again to ſay, that the Son is not the Father, and yet each is Jehovah, and Jehovah is one. Either deny this to be ſcripture, or ſay, that no ſcripture can prove the point. And then what ſignifies arguing from John i. or from Hebr. i.? It is all but empty amuſement.

It is aſked, can a perſon begotten be the expreſs image of a perſon unbegotten, when the properties are ſo unlike[u]? That our ſcripture has ſo taught[v], is as plain as the ſun. Therefore the queſtion ſhould have been put, whether the texts ſhall be allowed, or ſhall be ſtruck out of the canon? As to *begotten* and *unbegotten*,

[r] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 67. [s] Ibid. p. 68.
[t] See my ſecond Defence, Q. ix. 327. 2d. Edit. alias p. 322. Q. xxiii. p. 453. alias 448.
[u] Ibid. p. 68. [v] Col. i. 15. Hebr. i. 3.

unbegotten, they are relations only; and (to compare ſmall things with great) Adam unbegotten and Seth begotten were exceedingly alike, and one the expreſs image of the other, notwithſtanding. So there muſt be ſomething more than the circumſtance before mentioned, to prove a diſſimilitude, or inequality[w]. But this way of prying into what is unſearchable, in order to evade plain ſcripture texts, is not treating the ſcripture reverently. Neither is there any argument in it, any more than in a blind man's reaſoning about the nature of colours. A very acute and judicious writer well ſays: "'Tis cer-"tain we cannot ſpeak of God with too great "moderation. It is better to reſt ſatisfied with "an imperfect knowledge of him, by being "content with general ideas, than to run the "hazard of thinking unworthily of that great "being, by our raſhneſs in proceeding to de-"terminate ideas[x]." That is to ſay, by attempting to determine the modus, about which we have properly no ideas; or by turning ideas of pure intellect into ideas of imagination, which is equally abſurd. Hitherto we have been conſidering, whether the Son be another being (by which the author means another God) different from God the Father: which the objector has not proved.

2. We are next to conſider whether the Son be inferior, in nature, or perfections, or can be proved to be ſo from Hebr. i. It is pleaded, that

[w] See my Anſwer to Whitby, p. 14, 15.

[x] Creuſaz, new Art of Thinking, Vol. ii. p. 80. Engl. Edit.

that God *appointed him heir of all things*[y]. Therefore (for that muſt be the conſequence, or none) he is an inferior God. Why then is it not ſaid, that they are two Gods? However, to anſwer more directly, but withal very briefly; the Son's voluntary condeſcenſion neither ſuppoſes him inferior, nor makes him ſo.

It is further objected, that ſince God made the worlds *by him*, the Father only is efficient, and the Son the inſtrument[z]. It muſt be owned that the arians, formerly[a] as well as ſince, have ſuggeſted as much. But it is all fiction and fancy, without ſupport from ſcripture, confuted in this very chapter, as we ſhall ſee preſently. There is no foundation in the text for any ſuch unworthy thought of God the Son. The prepoſition by proves nothing of it; for it is frequently made uſe of in ſcripture, when the Father himſelf is the perſon to whom it is applied[b]. But what room is there for further diſpute here upon that head, when the text itſelf expreſſes the proper efficiency of God the Son, as fully and clearly as it is poſſible to be expreſſed? THOU LORD IN THE BEGINNING HAST LAID THE FOUNDATION OF THE EARTH, AND THE HEAVENS ARE THE WORKS

[y] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 69. [z] Ibid. p. 69.

[a] Vid. Athanaſ. Orat. i. p. 430. Orat. 2. 498.

[b] Baſil. de Spir. Sancto, Opp. Tom. iii. C. v. p. 6, &c. Edit. Bened. Taylor's true Script. Doctrine, p. 347.
Alexander's Eſſay on Irenæus, p. 148.
Franck's Nucleus, p. 118. My Sermons, p. 48.

WORKS OF THINE HANDS[c]. This is ſaid of God the Son[d], who is alſo Jehovah in the Pſalm from whence theſe words are taken. Could there be any words thought on, either plainer, or ſtronger, to expreſs a proper efficiency than thoſe are? And if thoſe are not ſufficient to ground our doctrine upon, what can we think of ſacred writ, (with reverence be it ſpoken) but as of a book overſpread with traps and ſnares, to deceive the chriſtian world? It is true, there are tropes, figures and metaphors in holy ſcripture, as when Chriſt is called a door, a vine, a way, and the like; or when God is ſaid to have eyes, hands, mouth, heart, &c. And, in ſuch caſes, every ſenſible man knows, that a literal conſtruction would be abſurd. But in the inſtance now before us, here is no mark at all of any trope, figure, or metaphor, nor any reaſonable objection againſt interpreting up to the letter. So far from it, that the whole tenor of ſcripture confirms us in it, that Chriſt is Jehovah, and properly creator. And the worſhip aſcribed to him is another concurring circumſtance to compleat the demonſtration. In ſhort then, thoſe arian ſalvos come too late. The text itſelf has, in expreſs words, precluded them.

The author goes on to object: "Upholding "all things, but by the word of God's power." Dr.

[c] Hebr. i. 10. compare Pſalm cii. 25.
[d] See my Defence, p. 95. Sermons, p. 63. Compare Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. ſ. 8. p. 319. Dr. Knight's Sermons, p. 51, &c.

Dr. Clarke interprets it Father's power: which is a poſſible, not a certain conſtruction. The text may as probably, or more probably be underſtood of the Son's own power. However, be it Father's or Son's, it is all one power, and he and his Father are one. The author[e] adds, "Seating himſelf not in God's throne, but at "his right hand[f]." And what then? Is he not a ſecond perſon? But it ſeems, that if he had been ſeated in the ſame throne, the author would then allow the equality. Turn we therefore to the book of Revelations, and there we find them both in one throne. It is THE THRONE (not thrones) OF GOD AND OF THE LAMB[g]. And Chriſt himſelf declares that he was in his Father's throne[h].

It is aſked, why ſhould angels be called upon, to worſhip him, if he were God equal to the Father? "Can they be ſuppoſed igno-"rant, if that were the caſe[i]?" To which I reply, that though angels were fully apprized of his high perfection and dignity, yet as to the particular times, places, and circumſtances, when, and where, and in what manner, they ſhould pay their homage or devotions, they might wait for ſpecial orders. The Father's manifeſting his Son to the world, was a new and extraordinary

[e] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 69.

[f] What the phraſe, of ſitting at God's right hand, imports, is very judiciouſly and carefully diſcuſſed by Vitringa, Obſ. Sacr. L. ii. C. 4, 5.

[g] Revel. xxii. 1.

[h] Revel. iii. 21. Compare Zechar. vi. 12, 13. and Vitringa, Ibid. C. 5, p. 310.

[i] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 70, 71.

extraordinary occaſion. And how ſhould the angels know in what manner they were to behave upon it, without particular direction? They were ordered thereupon to repeat or renew their ſolemn exerciſes of devotion towards the Son, now become man, and clothed in fleſh. As they had alſo ſpecial directions for celebrating his nativity, or incarnation in devout doxologies[k].

It is further pleaded, that the words, GOD, EVEN THY GOD, argue ſome inferiority of God the Son. Yes, of the Son conſidered as man[l] and in his ſtate of humiliation, in which God the Father *anointed Him with the oil of gladneſs*, with the unction of the ſpirit, *above his fellows*; his partners in the ſame nature[m], partakers of the ſame fleſh and blood; on which account *He is not aſhamed to call them brethren*[n].

The author aſks, why ſhould not the apoſtle roundly aſſert that Chriſt was Jehovah, if it were his purpoſe to ſet him forth as ſuch[o]? Had he done it ever ſo roundly, a contentious adverſary might ſtill have found fault, and might have

[k] Luke ii. 13, 14. Compare Rev. xii. 11, 12.

[l] Ἡ θεότης δὲ χρίεται, ἀλλ' ἡ ἀνθρωπότης· εἶτα παρὰ τὸς μετόχυς συ φησί. Τίνες δὲ εἰσιν οἱ μέτοχοι, ἀλλ' ἢ οἱ ἄνθρωποι; τυτέστι τὸ πνεῦμα ἐκ ἐκ μέτρυ ἔλαβεν ὁ χριτός. Chryſoſt. in loc. And ſo other Greek fathers, Baſil, Theodoret, Theophylact, Oecumenius.

[m] See Dr. Bennet on the Trinity, who explains the text at large, and very juſtly; excepting that he diſlikes the ancient notion of the unction of the ſpirit, which yet ſeems to be the true one, p. 31.—35.

[n] Hebr. ii. 11.

[o] Sober and charitable, &c. p. 73.

have required ſomewhat further. The apoſtle has ſaid what is ſufficient for the conviction of any reaſonable man, by applying what is directed to Jehovah in the Pſalm, to God the Son in this chapter. This is ſaying the thing roundly enough. And we are not obliged to give reaſons why he has ſaid no more, if he has ſaid what may ſuffice with men of ordinary diſcernment. But I may hint further, that a very probable reaſon may be aſſigned why he did not take that preciſe method which the objector fancies he ſhould have done. It was the apoſtle's direct deſign, as it ſeems, to prove that the Son was above the angels, in oppoſition, very probably, to the ſimonians or cerinthians of that time, who attributed the creation of the world to angels, and who looked upon Jeſus as a mere man, and as ſuch inferior to angels[q]. Therefore the apoſtle chiefly labours theſe two points, namely to prove that Chriſt was really creator[r], and that he is vaſtly ſuperior to angels. What he further inſinuates of his being Jehovah comes in by the by; and it would not have been directly to his purpoſe, to have inſiſted more particularly upon it. Becauſe even that would not have proved him (in the opinion of the heretics then prevailing) ſuperior to angels, ſince they looked upon Jehovah, the God of the Old Teſtament

[q] Vid. Bull. Judic. Eccl. C. v. ſ. 8. p. 320.
[r] Hebr. i. 2, 10.

ment as no more than angel[a]. However, though I aſſign a reaſon, which appears not improbable for the apoſtle's ſaying no more, yet we have a right to inſiſt upon it, that there is no need of aſſigning any reaſon at all for his not ſaying more than was ſufficient for every purpoſe. There is no end of cavils when men are diſpoſed to indulge them. The jews ſought after a ſign, but had none more given them, after they had had enough. They demanded that Chriſt ſhould come down from the croſs for their ſatisfaction. But infinite wiſdom would not condeſcend to ſatisfy them in their way, when they would not ſubmit to other very ſufficient and better evidences. The queſtion therefore is not, whether the apoſtle in this place has ſaid all that could have been ſaid, but whether he has ſaid as much as was needful. We conceive that he has. And let thoſe who think otherwiſe, conſider how they can fairly evade the force of what they here find, before they require more. Let them think how it is poſſible to elude what St. Paul has here ſaid to prove that Chriſt is Jehovah, though he has proved it only by the by, and has not largely or directly inſiſted upon it.

I ſhall

[a] Poſt hunc Cerinthus hæreticus erupit, ſimilia docens. Nam et ipſe mundum inſtitutum eſſe ab illis [angelis] dicit: Chriſtum ex ſemine Joſeph natum proponit, hominem illum tantummodo ſine divinitate contendens; ipſam quoque legem ab angelis datam perhibens; Judæorum Deum, non dominum, ſed angelum promens. Pſeudo Tertull. Præſcript. C. xlviii.

Conf. Epiphan. Hær. xxviii. 1.

I ſhall only add, that if the point is to be decided by the aſking of queſtions in this way, let leave be given to the orthodox alſo, to aſk a few queſtions in their turn. If Chriſt be a creature, why is it not roundly aſſerted, either in Old or New Teſtament? And if he and the Father be two Gods, ſupreme and inferior, why is not that alſo roundly aſſerted, in ſome part of ſcripture at leaſt? We have the more reaſon to expect it ſhould, becauſe otherwiſe the contrary doctrine hath ſo many, and ſo plauſible appearances of truth, that the moſt ſerious and conſcientious perſons are under inevitable danger of deception by them. And therefore, if we may be allowed to reaſon and argue with the tremendous Deity, upon the ſubject of his revelations, or diſpenſations towards mankind, none, we imagine, can with more juſtice, or with better grace, aſk; why, has not ſcripture, ſomewhere or other dropped a hint or two about Chriſt's being a creature, or about his being an inferior God, admitting two Gods, two adorable deities, to prevent our falling into an otherwiſe unavoidable deluſion? I doubt not, if that were the truth, but that our Lord himſelf (whoſe humility is ſo juſtly celebrated) and his diſciples after him, would have openly proclaimed it; and that we ſhould have as plainly found it in the New Teſtament throughout, as now we find the reverſe. Can we imagine that a truth of that moment (if it were a truth) ſhould be left in obſcurity, to be drawn out at length, after more than

than 300 years, by Arius, Aetius, and Eunomius[t]; and that by the help chiefly of logical conceits, and metaphyſical ſpeculations, far above the reach of common capacities? Certainly divine wiſdom could not be ſo much wanting to the bulk of mankind, but would have provided better for them, in a ſcriptural way; and by plain words, that ſo they might be more beholden to Chriſt and his apoſtles for their faith, than to the dialectics of Ariſtotle, or Chryſippus's ſubtleties[u]. But I forbear to preſs this further: and having briefly run through all that the author of "Sober and charitable Diſ-"quiſition" had to urge in favour of the arian interpretation, both of John i. and Hebr. i. I muſt now leave it to the impartial readers to judge, whether any thing has been offered on that ſide, which can be thought ſufficient to counterbalance our plain and direct evidences brought from expreſs words, fixed to a certain meaning by all the approved rules of grammar and

[t] Clariſſimis ſcripturæ teſtimoniis argumentationes metaphyſicæ argutiæ opponere, Eunomii eſt, qui ab Aetio magiſtro edoctus, eſſentiam divinam penitus ac perfecte ſcilicet cognitam ſibi habere perſuadebat. "Tam perſpicue Deum qualis ſit novi, "ac tantam illius notitiam ſum conſecutus, ut ne me ipſum "quidem melius quam illum noverim." Aetius apud Epiphanium lxxvi. p. 916, 989. Eunomius ipſe, majore etiam inſolentiâ apud Socratem, iv. 7. "De ſui ipſius eſſentiâ, Deus "nihil amplius ſcit quam nos: nec illa ipſi quidem notior, nobis "autem obſcurior." Fabric. Bibl. Græc. L. v. C. 23. p. 272. Conf. Baſil. contr. Eunom. L. i. p. 224. Teodorit. Hæret. Fab. L. iv. C. 3. Cyrill. Alex. Theſaur. p. 260. Chryſoſt. Hom. 27. Tom. i. p. 307. Philoſtorg. L. i. p. 468, 470. Ed. Valeſ. Gregor. Nazianz. Orat. 34. p. 539.

[u] Vid. Baſil. contr. Eunom. L. i. p. 214, 221.

and criticiſm, and confirmed by the univerſal ſuffrage of the firſt and pureſt ages. Thus far I was obliged to enter into a ſmall part of the other controverſy, which affects the truth of the doctrine, rather than the importance; becauſe, as I hinted in the entrance, the author I am concerned with, had mingled them in ſome ſort together. But they who deſire fuller ſatisfaction in that other queſtion, may pleaſe to conſult thoſe treatiſes which are profeſſedly written upon it. What comes in here amounts only to ſlight touches, and ſo far only as related to the texts mentioned. Which though juſtly reckoned definitive on our ſide, are yet but a very ſlender part of what the whole ſcripture affords us in that cauſe.

ADDENDA.

ADDENDA.

Additional Illuſtrations referring to the reſpective Pages above.

Page 18. *IDEAS of intellect*, &c. The diſtinction between ideas of intellect and ideas of imagination, is much inſiſted on by Des Cartes in his metaphyſics[a], and is explained more clearly and to better advantage in a late judicious treatiſe written by Mr. Crouſaz in French, and now rendered into Engliſh[b].

P. 79 *The ſame with his eternal exiſtence.* My meaning is, that Epiſcopius (which is true alſo of Limborch) did not diſtinguiſh in that inſtance between the eternal generation of the Logos, and the eternal exiſtence; as ſome of the ancients did[c].

P. 111. *Such effects might laſt beyond the apoſtolic age.* I might have expreſſed myſelf with greater aſſurance, and ſaid, that they actually did laſt

[a] Carteſii Meditat. vi. p. 36. Object. v. p. 45. Reſponſ. v. p. 78.

[b] Crouſaz, new treatiſe of the Art of Thinking, Vol. i. p. 16, &c.

[c] See my Defence, Q. viii. p. 161, 162. Second Defence, Q. viii. p. 322.

laſt as far down as to the cyprianic age[d]: nay, and if we may believe Paulinus[e], who reports it as an eye witneſs, they continued down to the latter end of the fourth century. From whence may fairly be accounted for, the long continuance of the phraſe of *delivering over to Satan*, in excommunications[f]. Indeed, the uſe of the form remained afterwards, when ſuch miraculous effects had intirely ceaſed. Becauſe the form had been cuſtomary from the beginning; and becauſe it might ſtill be underſtood in a ſenſe not altogether foreign to its firſt intention, ſuch as I have expreſſed above.

P. 126. *He may be in ſome meaſure hurt in his reputation by it, and that is all.* I would be underſtood here of the general caſe only[g], abſtracting from particular caſes and circumſtances; as of miniſters, ſuppoſe, whoſe maintenance alſo may be accidentally affected by it. An inconvenience common to eccleſiaſtical offices or civil, as

[d] See Dodwell Diſſertat. in Iren. ii. 54. p. 191—194.

[e] Quem cum interrogaſſet [Ambroſius] et deprehendiſſet autorem tanti flagitii, ait: oportet illum *tradi Satanæ in interitum carnis*, ne talia in poſterum audeat admittere: quem eodem momento, cum adhuc ſermo eſſet in ore ſacerdotis, ſpiritus immundus arreptum diſcerpere cœpit. Quo viſo, non minimo timore repleti ſumus et admiratione. Paulin. in vit. Ambroſ. p. 9.

[f] See Biſhop Hare, Scripture vindicated, p. 69, 70.

[g] Denique bono aut æquo non contraria eſt excommunicationis pœna, quâ nulla manſuetior. Non admovet flagra corporibus, non aptat vincula, non denuntiat mortem, non eripit bona, non abdicat dignitates; indignis abnuit ſacramenta quibus in perniciem ſuam abuterentur. Itaque tota et ad Dei gloriam et ad peccantis ſalutem eſt comparata. Sam. Baſnag. Annal. Tom. ii. p. 481.

as often as men diſable themſelves from ſerving, either by refuſing to give the legal ſecurities, or by oppoſing the public meaſures.

P. 127. *Or to pay them ſo much as common civilities.* That is to ſay, when ſuch civilities were likely to be interpreted as an approbation of the men and of their principles. But ſee this rule of the apoſtle conſidered more at large, under its proper reſtrictions and limitations, by an able hand[h].

P. 155. *A wicked life the worſt hereſy, which is ſcarce ſenſe,* &c. At the beſt, it is a ſtrong figure, or a turn of wit, and the thought not juſt upon the whole. But ſomething of it may be traced up as high as to St. Bernard of the twelfth century, who argued that vicious perſons were ſeducers by their bad example, and therefore were a kind of heretics in practice, corrupting more by their ill lives, than heretics, properly ſo called, could do by their bad doctrines[i]. And he applies it particularly to vicious clergymen; not to extenuate the guilt of hereſy, but to inhance the guilt of ſuch bad example. The thought was not much amiſs, if he had not carried it too far. He ſhould not have ſuggeſted, that bad example is worſe than

[h] Dr. Berriman's Sermon, in the Appendix to his Boyle's Lectures, Vol. ii. p. 339.

[i] Multi ſunt catholici prædicando, qui hæretici ſunt operando. Quod hæretici faciunt per prava dogmata, hoc faciunt plures hodie per mala exempla. Seducunt ſcilicet populum et inducunt in errorem; et tanto graviores ſunt hæreticis quanto prævalent opera verbis. Bernard. Serm. ad Paſtores, p. 1732.

than hereſy properly ſo called. It is true, that bad example commonly will do more harm than ſound preaching will do good; becauſe ſuch example runs in with corrupt nature, and the other is contrary; but if the doctrine be on the ſame ſide, it will do infinitely more miſchief; and one looſe caſuiſt will debauch more than a hundred others ſhall do who are only looſe in their lives. Bad example under the check and diſcountenance of ſound doctrine taught by the ſame perſon, carries its antidote along with it. But bad doctrine is a very dangerous ſnare. It is not merely breaking a law, but looſening the authority of all[k]. Therefore Bernard ſtrained the thought too far: and ſo Dean Colet after him[l]; who is the firſt man I have met with, that

[k] "Who will maintain that a prince would do better in "changing the laws according to his preſent paſſions, than to "let them ſubſiſt, and break them every hour? Nobody. For, "if he obſerves not the laws as he ſhould, he leaves them "their authority however, with reſpect to his ſubjects and ſuch "other princes as are willing to obſerve them; which is abſo-"lutely neceſſary to ſociety.—If it be aſked then, which car-"riage is moſt dangerous and blameable, that of ſuch as violate "the laws of the goſpel which they believe to be divine, or "that of the incredulous who reject the divinity of thoſe "laws, becauſe they have no mind to obey them; it is plain "that the latter is much worſe than the former, ſuppoſing the "laws of the goſpel to be beneficial to ſociety, which cannot "be doubted." Le Clerc, Cauſes of Incredulity, p. 88, 89.

The caſe which Le Clerc here puts, is not preciſely the ſame with the other, but the reaſon is the ſame for both.

[l] "He ſheweth plainly, that there be two kinds of hereſies, "one ariſing from perverſe teaching, and the other from a "naughty life: of which two this latter is far worſe and more "perillous, reigning now in prieſts." Colet's Sermon before the convocation, A. D. 1511. reprinted in the Phœnix, Vol. i. p. 7.

that ventured formally to ſay (for Bernard had not expreſſed the figure ſo boldly) that a bad life was a hereſy, and the worſt hereſy. However, neither of them intended to extenuate the guilt of hereſy at all, but to magnify another kind of guilt as ſtill greater according to their way of reaſoning, or rather rhetoricating.

Archbiſhop Tillotſon glances upon the ſame thought[m], but gives a very different turn to it; and cannot, I think, be reaſonably underſtood of hereſy ſtrictly and properly ſuch, but of what ſome have wrongfully called ſo. Biſhop Taylor, a very moderate man, in a treatiſe written on the ſide of liberty, may be a very proper arbitrator, to clear and determine the whole diſpute.

" Men think they have more reaſon to be " zealous againſt hereſy than againſt a vice in " manners, becauſe it is infectious and dan- " gerous,

[m] Tillotſon's Sermons, Vol. i. p. 402. Fol. Edit. His reflection upon thoſe who were too cenſorious in charging hereſy upon others, and at the ſame time too indulgent to their own vices, runs thus:

" Deluded people! that do not conſider, that the greateſt " hereſy in the world is a wicked life, becauſe it is ſo directly " oppoſite to the whole deſign of the chriſtian faith and re- " ligion; and that do not conſider, that God will ſooner for- " give a man a hundred defects of his underſtanding, than one " fault of his will."

N. B. Hereſy, juſtly ſo called, is not a mere defect of underſtanding, but a fault of the will. And it is more directly oppoſite to religion than common offences; as overturning the authority of a law is worſe than tranſgreſſing it; or as mutiny, ſedition, and rebellion are worſe than common felonies.

" gerous, and the principle of much evil. In-
" deed, if by hereſy we mean that which is
" againſt an article of the creed, and breaks
" part of the covenant between God and man
" by the mediation of Jeſus Chriſt, I grant
" it to be a grievous crime, a calling God's
" veracity in queſtion, and a deſtruction alſo
" of a good life; becauſe upon the articles of
" the creed obedience is built, and it lives
" or dies as the effect does by its proper
" cauſe. For, faith is the moral cauſe of
" obedience. But then hereſy, that is, ſuch as
" this, is alſo a vice, and the perſon cri-
" minal, and ſo the ſin is to be eſteemed in
" its degrees of malignity. And let men be
" as zealous againſt it as they can, and employ
" the whole arſenal of the ſpiritual armour againſt
" it. Such as this, is worſe than adultery or
" murder: inaſmuch as the ſoul is more noble
" than the body, and a falſe doctrine is of
" greater diſſemination and extent than a ſingle
" act of violence or impurity. Adultery or
" murder is a duel, but hereſy (truly and in-
" deed ſuch) is an unlawful war, it ſlays thou-
" ſands. The loſing of faith is digging down
" a foundation. All the ſuperſtructure of hope
" and patience and charity fall with it.—But
" then concerning thoſe things which men now
" adays call hereſy, they cannot be ſo formid-
" able as they are repreſented. And if we
" conſider that drunkenneſs is certainly a damna-
" ble ſin, and that there are more drunkards

" than heretics, and that drunkenneſs is the " parent of a thouſand vices, it may be better " ſaid of this vice than of moſt of thoſe opi- " nions which we call hereſies, it is infectious " and dangerous, and the principle of much " evil, and therefore as fit an object of our " pious zeal to conteſt againſt[u], &c." Thus far Biſhop Taylor.

In the ſum of the matter, I entirely agree with him. The reſult, I think, is, that nominal hereſy, or an error in ſlight matters, not affecting the foundation, not hurting the vitals of chriſtianity, is not ſo bad as real immorality. And it is equally true, on the other hand, that nominal immorality is not ſo bad as real error in religion, though in the ſlighter doctrines. But ſuppoſing the error and the maintaining of it to amount to real hereſy, it is then a vice, and the greateſt of vices. So the whole will turn upon the nature, quality and tendency of what is charged as an hereſy. Invincible ignorance will equally excuſe any other vice; and ſo is wide of the purpoſe.

P. 196. *All parties are for creeds under one ſhape or other.* It may be aſked perhaps, what creed the ſceptics are for, who profeſs to doubt of every thing? I anſwer, that their pretended ſcepticiſm is moſtly affectation, and they generally are as credulous as other men; frequently more ſo. If they believe leſs of religion, as ſome of them perhaps may, yet they are eaſy of

[u] Taylor's Liberty of Propheſying, Dedicat. p. 42, 43.

of belief as to any thing elſe. They have their ſyſtems, their maxims, their probabilities (as they are pleaſed to call them) which make up as long and large creeds as our certainties do. Only there is this difference, that they commonly prefer a creed of paradoxes, and ſometimes glaring abſurdities, before a rational faith. And while we believe as much as we can prove, and no more (which is believing like wiſe men) they believe what they have a mind to, proving nothing, by their own confeſſion; which is reſolving all into fond perſuaſion and credulity.

The moſt conſiderable writer, I know of, that ever appeared in behalf of general ſcepticiſm (matters of faith only excepted) is the celebrated Huetius, in a poſthumous treatiſe[o], written, I ſuppoſe, for an exerciſe of wit, to divert himſelf and friends; unleſs he had ſome further latent view to ſerve the Romiſh cauſe. I may remark, that one article of his ſceptical creed is, that the certainty of faith is ſuperior to that of ſenſe. A ſecond is, that it is ſuperior even to that of the firſt principles and axioms of geometry[p]. One cannot deſire any two plainer inſtances of the credulity of a ſceptic. I mention not, how often he forgets the part he was to act, talking in the ſtile of a dogmatiſt: "Sure it is," or "it is cer-" tain[q]." Sometimes, he is "fully perſuaded[r]," or

[o] A philoſophical treatiſe concerning the Weakneſs of human Underſtanding. Printed in Engliſh, London, 1725.

[p] Huet. Philoſoph. Treatiſe, &c. p. 15.

[q] P. 28, 30, 34, 68, 75, 98, 150. [r] P. 7.

or "fully convinced[s]," or "certainly knows[t]:" at other times, he ſpeaks of evident proof[u], and irrefragable argument[x], and demonſtration[y], juſt as any dogmatiſt would do. So hard a thing is it for the fineſt wit, even to perſonate a ſceptic with any tolerable grace, or without perpetual inconſiſtency. For which reaſon I before hinted that I look upon ſcepticiſm, ſo called, to be little elſe but affectation. Or if there really be any ſuch kind of men who believe that they believe nothing, that very inſtance is an undeniable argument of their more than common credulity. Indeed for a man to fall to arguing and proving that there is no ſuch thing as proof or argument, is much the ſame as if one ſhould make an eloquent harangue, lamenting that mortal men have not the faculty of ſpeech, loudly complaining that all mankind are mutes.

P. 198. *Our way ſuppoſes that men ought to examine (if capable, and as far as capable) in order to know that the doctrine propoſed is true.* If it ſhould be aſked, what need of examination after ſo many wiſe and good men, and all morally certain? I would aſk again, what need is there of ſtudying the demonſtrations of Euclid which all the world agree in, as containing certain truth? A man might ſafely enough take them for granted, and by ſo doing might as ſoon become a ſound geometrician, as by the like method, in the other caſe,

[s] P. 33. [t] P. 14. [u] P. 40. [x] P. 52.
[y] P. 99. comp. 100, 104.

caſe, he might commence a ſound divine, or a confirmed chriſtian. At beſt, it would be reſting faith upon mere human authority, which would be reſting it on a wrong bottom; and beſides, would be neglecting the due improvement of the heart, and cultivation of the mind.

But may there not be danger in examining, danger of being led to diſſent from what is right, and to embrace ſome error? Undoubtedly there may. And what conveniency is there without ſome inconveniency? Such danger muſt be riſked, rather than found our faith upon a wrong principle, to render it worthleſs and contemptible. It is better to hazard the chance of falling into ſome error in faith, than to be certain of committing a greater error in conduct. However, if men come with humility, modeſty, and circumſpection to the examination, and have patience to ſtay till they are clear, before they formally diſſent, or before they declare it openly; there will be no great danger in examining every thing with the utmoſt ſeverity. The danger lies in examining by halves.

P. 200. *The phraſe of having dominion over ones faith, is of obſcure meaning*, &c. I did not then call to mind how well the meaning of that phraſe had been lately cleared up by a very learned hand[y].

P. 257. *The darkneſs cometh not upon it.* I referred to a very judicious critic, Lambert Bos, for

[y] Biſhop Hare. Scripture vindicated, p. 60—63.

for the juſtifying my rendering of this text. I find ſince, that the learned Wolfius diſapproves of what Bos had offered[z]. But I abide by Bos notwithſtanding, who plainly has reaſon on his ſide. He did not inſiſt merely upon the force of the word καταλαβεῖν, but upon the phraſe, upon the verb as joined with σκότος or σκοτία. The examples which he gives from ſacred and profane writers, of the uſe of the phraſe, are all clear and full to his purpoſe. And if there be need of additional examples from eccleſiaſtical writers, there are ſeveral; as Origen[a], Cyril of Alexandria[b], and Thophylact[c]. Clemens of Alexandria, in his comment (if it be his) ſeems to take in both the ſenſes of that verb into his conſtruction of the text[d]. As to the alluſion to the gnoſtic principles (I uſe the word gnoſtic in the larger ſenſe) which I ſuppoſe in the words of St. John, neither Bos nor Wolfius take notice, nor ſeem to have been aware of it. But if

[z] Ingenioſior quam verior hîc eſt Lamb. Bos interpretatio—quod natura λόγου ſanctiſſima et puriſſima ſit, nec minimam cum impuritate habet communionem. Τὸ καταλαμβάνειν itaque per opprimere converti voluit. Quæ notio quamvis in N. T. et apud ipſum Joannem noſtrum, Cap. xii. 35. occurrat, ab hoc tamen loco aliena merito cenſetur, in quo non tam quid tenebræ in Chriſtum molitæ ſint, aut moliri potuerint, quam quid Chriſtus in tenebras molitus ſit, exponitur. Conf. v. 10, 11.—Itaque rectius notio illa vocis καταλαβεῖν hic tenetur, quæ receptionem aut agnitionem infert. Hanc enim N. T. ſcriptoribus imprimis familiarem eſſe patet ex Actor. iv. 13. Rom. ix. 30. Wolfii curæ Philolog. et Crit. in loc. Vol. i. p. 784.

[a] Origen. Comment. in Joan. Edit. Huet. p. 73, 74.

[b] Cyril. Alex. Comment. in Johann. p. 23.

[c] Theophylact. in loc. p. 561.

[d] Clemens Alex. Excerpt. Theodoti. p. 969. Edit. Ox.

if the obſervation be juſt, as it appears very probable (and I ſhall ſay more of it preſently) that alſo is a confirmation of ſuch ſenſe of the phraſe as Bos pleads for; and the two conſiderations taken together, anſwer very aptly to each other, which is an argument that both are right.

P. 258. *The ancient magian notion of a good God and an evil God, the firſt called light, and the other darkneſs, &c.* A brief account of that ancient notion may be ſeen in Dean Prideaux[e], and a large hiſtory both of its riſe and progreſs among the pagans, in Wolfius[f]. And how the ſame notion was revived, or augmented with new fooleries, among the heretics of the apoſtolical times, may be underſtood from a noted fragment of Baſilides, preſerved by Archelaus of the third century, in his account of his diſputation with Manes[g]. Now, conſidering that Cerinthus

[e] Prideaux's Connection, Vol. i. p. 179. 8vo. Edit.

[f] Wolfii Manichæiſmus ante Manichæum, ſ. ii. p. 48—174.

[g] The fragment of Baſilides is as follows.

" Deſine ab inani et curioſâ varietate; requiramus autem " magis quæ de bonis et malis etiam barbari inquiſiêrunt, et in " quas opiniones de his omnibus pervenerunt. Quidam enim " horum dixerunt, initia omnium duo eſſe, quibus bona et mala " aſſociaverunt, ipſa dicentes initia et ingenita: id eſt, in " principiis, lucem fuiſſe ac tenebras, quæ ex ſemetipſis erant, " non quæ eſſe dicebantur. Hæc cum apud ſemetipſa eſſent, " propriam unum quodque eorum vitam agebat quam vellet, et " qualis ſibi competeret. Omnibus enim amicum eſt quod eſt " proprium, et nihil ſibi ipſum malum videtur. Poſtquam au- " tem ad alterutrûm agnitionem uterque pervenit, et tenebræ " contemplatæ ſunt lucem, tanquam melioris rei ſumpta con- " cupiſcentia, infectabantur ea commiſceri." Archel. et Manet. Diſput.

thus was among thoſe who had adopted the old notion of a good God and an evil God, (as Epiphanius has informed us[h]) and ſo of courſe muſt have fallen in with the old magian principles; Baſilides may reaſonably be allowed of as a good interpreter of Cerinthus in thoſe articles. And ſince St. John, very manifeſtly ſtruck at ſeveral other tenets of Cerinthus, in his divine proeme, it is more than probable that what he ſays in verſe the 5th about light and darkneſs, alludes to the gnoſtic notion then prevailing, and is a confutation of it[i]. They pretended that the evil God darkneſs purſued the light, and came up to it. He aſſerts, that the darkneſs came not upon it, never laid hold of it, never approached to obſtruct or obſcure it, but was irradiated and illuminated by it. It may further be conſidered, that Baſilides, probably, flouriſhed in the firſt century, and might be contemporary with

Diſput. p. 194. Fabric. Conf. Wolf. Manich. p. 177. Grab. Spicileg. Vol. ii. p. 39.

[h] Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxviii. 2. p. 111.

[i] Accordingly, Archelaus (in his diſpute with Manes) confutes that hypotheſis from this very text; which is a great confirmation not only of the conſtruction of the phraſe before given, but likewiſe of ſuch application of the text as I have been pleading for. His words are:

" Quomodo et ipſe [malus Deus] cum ſit omnino totus te-
" nebræ, Luci ſupervenit et comprehendit, evangeliſta teſti-
" monium ferente, quia *lucet in tenebris, et tenebræ eam non*
" *comprehenderunt?*"

" How could it be that the evil God, being that he is all
" darkneſs, ſhould come upon the light, and compaſs it, when
" the evangeliſt declares, that the light ſhined through the
" darkneſs, and the darkneſs compaſſed it not?"

with St. John, as both Jerome[i] and Epiphanius[k] ſeem to aſſert. And though learned men have diſputed it, yet[l] Maſſuet appears to have well cleared up the point againſt the moſt material objections. Now, if Baſilides himſelf was ſo early, it is the more likely that St. John, writing at that time, might have an eye to the pernicious doctrine then propagated by him, and by the whole ſet of gnoſtics. By gnoſtics I underſtand all that ſort of men, who derived their principles from Simon Magus, and lived in the apoſtolic age; though I am aware that in a ſtricter and more ſpecial ſenſe[m], the gnoſtics may be ſaid to have riſen up in the ſecond century.

P. 299. *Irenæus born in or near the apoſtles' times, and was advanced in years when he wrote.* I here follow Dodwell in a matter which requires not, and indeed admits not of a ſcrupulous or critical exactneſs. However, ſince Dodwell has been blamed by more than one, for his chronology in that article, I may juſt mention how the different accounts ſtand in relation to the year when Irenæus was born. According to Dodwell, A. D. 97. Grabe chuſes the year 108. Tillemont, the year 120: others, 135. Maſſuet ſets it the lateſt of all, A. D. 140. According to which different computations, Irenæus muſt be ſuppoſed

[i] Hieronym. cont. Lucifer. p. 304. Opp. Tom. iv. Bened. Edit.

[k] Epiphan. Hæreſ. xxxi. 2.

[l] Maſſuet. Diſſertat. præv. in Irenæum, p. 60.

[m] See Wolfius. Manichæiſmus, &c. p. 206. Buddeus Eccleſ. Apoſtol. p. 344, 345, 571, &c.

ſuppoſed either older or younger when he wrote, if he wrote in 176, or thereabouts, as moſt agree that he did. Though ſome differ alſo as to that, ſetting the date of his writings 10 or 15 years lower.

P. 438. *In ſtrictneſs they were not interpretations of ſcripture, but rather pious meditations upon ſcripture. I am ſenſible that ſome of them were intended as ſtrict interpretations: but in the general, &c.*

To confirm and illuſtrate what I have here ſaid, it may be obſerved, that St. Auſtin took into the allegorical way of interpreting, when he was yet but a new convert, becauſe he thought it much eaſier than the literal way, which he was not then ſo well prepared for. He had not at that time (ſo he tells us himſelf[n]) ſufficient leiſure or abilities to undertake ſo hard a province as the unfolding the literal ſenſe, and therefore contented himſelf with giving only the myſtical, or allegorical. Could a ſenſible man ſo ſpeak, and at the ſame time imagine that the myſtical

[n] Et quia non mihi tunc occurrebant omnia quemadmodum proprie poſſint accipi, magiſque non poſſe accipi videbantur, aut vix poſſe, aut difficile; ne retardarer, quid figurate ſignificarent ea quæ ad literam non potui invenire, quantâ valui brevitate et perſpicuitate explicavi, ne vel multâ lectione vel diſputationis obſcuritate deterriti, in manus ea ſumere non curarent. Auguſtin. de Gen. ad Liter. L. viii. C. 2. p. 227. Tom. iii. Bened.

Note, That St. Auſtin in the year 389, then a new convert, ventured no farther, than the allegorical expoſition of Geneſis. But in the year 401, he undertook the literal explication alſo, in xii books [de Geneſi ad literam] which he finiſhed about 415.

cal conſtruction he pretended to give, was the true mind of the Holy Ghoſt? Or could he conceive that he had any certain foundation for the myſtical ſenſe (ſo conſidered) before he had found out the literal one to ground it upon? No ſurely. But thinking himſelf at liberty to raiſe any true and inſtructive moral from the text, he gave it as a good leſſon to ruminate upon, rather than as a ſtrict interpretation of the words before him. He, and other allegorizers like him, might apprehend that dry hiſtory, or a mere narrative of facts, would be unentertaining, or unedifying to common readers or hearers, and therefore they had a mind to furniſh them with proper meditations, moral and religious, to graft upon ſuch parts of ſacred writ; that ſo whenever they ſhould hear or read any ſcripture hiſtory, ſuch reflections alſo might occur to their minds, for improving the ſame to ſpiritual uſes°. And whether ſuch ſpiritual uſes were really intended in ſuch place by the ſacred penman, or no, yet if the words might be but aptly accommodated thereto, and were but pertinently and ſoberly applied, and the analogy of faith preſerved,

° Eo minus vero mirandum, quod veteris eccleſiæ doctoribus hæc ipſa (allegorica) ſcripturarum explicandi ratio placuerit, quod et illi crederint, in ſcripturæ lectione unice hoc agendum, ut quæ fidem alere ac fovere, vitamque inſtruere poſſunt, inde hauriamus, reliqua non magnopere ad nos pertinere.—Prævaluit fere myſtica illa et allegorica interpretandi ratio; pluribuſque, ob inſignem quem in vitæ fideique praxi habere videbatur uſum, ſe commendabat. Buddei Iſagog. Vol. ii. p. 1786.

ſerved, a good end was anſwered thereby, and true doctrine at leaſt kept, if not true interpretation[p].

Nevertheleſs it muſt be owned that the allegorizing fathers did ſometimes intend ſuch comments as ſtrict and proper interpretations; particularly, where they thought that the obvious literal meaning carried ſome abſurdity in it, or elſe was too low and trivial to be the whole deſign of the ſacred writer, or ſpirit of God. They had St. Paul's example to go upon: *doth God*, ſays he, *take care for oxen*[q]*?* Intimating that ſuch literal interpretation, ſingly conſidered, was too low and jejune a ſenſe to fix upon the law, in Deuteronomy[r], and that therefore there was a neceſſity of ſuppoſing ſome higher meaning, and good reaſon for looking out for one. The like might be the caſe with other paſſages of the old Teſtament, and very probably is. And ſo the fathers endeavoured, wherever they apprehended any neceſſity of riſing above the letter, to ſearch out the myſtical intendment; and in their ſearches of that kind they ſometimes

[p] Cum divinos libros legimus, in tantâ multitudine verorum intellectuum, qui de paucis verbis eruuntur, et ſanitate catholicæ fidei muniuntur, id potiſſimum deligamus quod certum apparuerit eum ſenſiſſe quem legimus. Si autem hoc latet, id certe quod circumſtantia ſcripturæ non impedit, et cum ſanâ fide concordat. Si autem et ſcripturæ circumſtantia pertractari ac diſcuti non poteſt, ſaltem id ſolum quod fides ſana præſcribit. Aliud eſt enim quid potiſſimum ſcriptor ſenſerit non dignoſcere, aliud a regulâ pietatis errare.—Si voluntas ſcriptoris incerta ſit, ſanæ fidei congruam non inutile eſt eruiſſe ſententiam. Auguſtin. de Gen. ad Literam. L. i. C. 41. p. 132.

[q] 1 Cor. ix. 9. [r] Deuteron. xxv. 4.

times indulged their fancies too far, giving their own conjectures (but modeſtly, and within the analogy of faith) for the ſenſe of ſcripture. And what commentator is there that may not ſometimes, or often, miſtake in interpreting the obſcure places of ſacred writ? A good ſenſe, that is to ſay, a ſenſe conſiſtent with ſound doctrine, every wiſe man will be ſure to make choice of. But as to the true ſenſe of the place, in ſuch inſtances, it is what the wiſeſt cannot often be ſure of, or take upon them to warrant.

I ſhall only add, that in order to form a more diſtinct idea of the ancient ways of interpreting, it may be proper to bear in mind that three fold method of commenting which St. Jerome lays down[a]; namely, the hiſtorical, tropological, and theorical: or, in more familiar terms, the literal, moral, and ſublime. The firſt of the three looked only to the grammatical meaning of the words, for the information of the hearers. The other two aimed at

[a] Triplex in corde noſtro deſcriptio et regula ſcripturarum eſt. Prima, ut intelligamus eas juxta hiſtoriam: ſecunda, juxta tropologiam: tertia, juxta intelligentiam ſpiritualem.

1. In hiſtoriâ, eorum quæ ſcripta ſunt ordo ſervatur:

2. In tropologiâ, de literâ ad majora conſurgimus; et quidquid in priori populo carnaliter factum eſt, juxta moralem interpretamur locum, et ad animæ noſtræ emolumenta convertimus.

3. In ſpirituali θεωρίᾳ, ad ſublimiora tranſimus, terrena dimittimus, de futurorum beatitudine et cæleſtibus diſputamus, ut præſentis vitæ meditatio umbra futuræ beatitudinis ſit.

Hieronmy. ad Hedib. Tom. iv. p. 186. Edit. Bened.

at improving their morals, and elevating their affections. Which ends might be, in a good meaſure, anſwered by appoſite meditations upon the text, though they ſhould not happen to be true interpretations. And it was that conſideration chiefly, as I conceive, which made the fathers take the more freedom in moralizing and ſpiritualizing (if I may ſo ſpeak) the letter of ſacred writ. See the laſt paſſage which I quoted from St. Auſtin, intimating as much.

P. 468. *Men of as great ſenſe, learning and piety, to all outward appearance, as any in their times, have ſometimes fallen into hereſy.* I might mention Tertullian, Apollinaris, and ſeveral more[a]. But it has been ſuggeſted by ſome perſons, that according to the ſcripture account of hereſy, none were chargeable with it, but men who knowingly eſpouſed falſe doctrine, who were directly ſelf condemned as teaching what they knew to be wrong, men of vile and diſhoneſt principles, and of a flagitious character; in ſhort monſters of lewdneſs or impiety. And all this is grounded upon the ſcattered deſcriptions given of ſeveral kinds of heretics, in ſeveral parts of the New Teſtament. I have not here room to conſider this whole matter at large; nor is it neceſſary I ſhould, ſince I have obviated the main of it in the preceding ſheets. But to prevent any perſon's being impoſed

[a] Vid. Vincent. Lirinenſ. C. 15, 16, 23, 24.

poſed upon by ſuch ſuggeſtions, I may here throw in a few brief, and I hope, pertinent conſiderations.

1. All hereſies mentioned in ſcripture were not of equal malignity. It is not right to apply to all, what was true of ſome only; or to draw together all the ill features of ſeveral ſects, or men, into one picture of deformity, and to make it ſerve for the picture of every individual.

2. The apoſtles do not charge all the falſe teachers with flagitious, or openly ſcandalous lives, and lewd doctrines, but the nicolaitans chiefly, if not ſolely.

3. Some others are charged with ſecularity, and ſelfiſh views, but not all. The apoſtles, having the gift of diſcerning ſpirits, and writing by the ſpirit of God, might juſtly ſo charge them: otherwiſe many of them might have paſſed, and would have paſſed as perſons of a fair character, full of godly zeal[b], and miniſters of righteouſneſs[c]. It was to prevent their paſſing for ſuch, that the apoſtles took the advantage they extraordinarily had, to expoſe the ſecret views of the men, leſt they ſhould deceive whole churches by a fair outward deportment.

4. As to thoſe whom the apoſtles ſo charged with ſiniſter views, or corrupt motives, it cannot be proved that they taught what they knew

[b] Gal. iv. 17. [c] 2 Cor. xi. 13, 14, 15.

knew to be falſe, or believed to be wrong. But their inclinations governed their faith, and they eaſily believed what their paſſions, pride, vanity or popularity ſuggeſted to them; which is a very common caſe[d]. So that it does not appear that thoſe falſe apoſtles were formerly ſelf condemned, or any otherwiſe than as all falſe teachers and evil doers are ſelf condemned, when they might know and do better; though many of them enjoy great ſelf ſatisfaction.

5. Whatever the motives of ſuch men were, the apoſtles did not anathematize them for their corrupt motives, but for their corrupt doctrines; which would have deſerved the ſame anathema though taught with the beſt intention, and moſt upright views, either by the apoſtles themſelves, or by an angel from heaven[e]. St. John, in particular, does not ſay, whoſoever upon ill motives abideth not in Chriſt's doctrine, or bringing not this doctrine, *receive him not*; but ſimply, whoſoever *tranſgreſſeth and abideth not in the doctrine of Chriſt*, or *bringeth not this doctrine*[f]: there lay all the ſtreſs.

6. Ill motives would corrupt even the beſt works. So, the throwing all the malignity of hereſy

[d] "Men are apt to believe what they deſire: and the "weakeſt reaſons which perſuade them, appear like de-"monſtrations."

See Le Clerc's whole chapter on this head, in his Parrhaſiana, Ch. vii. p. 226. Compare Cauſes of Incredulity, Part i. C. 1, 2, 3.

[e] Gal. i. 8.

[f] 2 John 9, 10.

hereſy upon the ill motives, is making no fault of the hereſy at all, not ſpecifying any difference, in moral account, between preaching the truth of the goſpel, and ſubverting it. For to do either upon wicked motives is undoubtedly a wicked thing.

7. The deſign of the apoſtles in expoſing the corrupt views of heretics, was not to juſtify their anathema, or cenſure (which was juſt without, becauſe of the corrupt doctrine) but to prevent the deception of the ſimple, who were in danger of being beguiled by flattering profeſſions of love and tenderneſs towards men, and of zeal and conſcience towards God. As is plain in the caſe of the judaizing heretics, who were believing phariſees, and who plauſibly pleaded the law of God[g]. To obviate ſuch plauſible and enſnaring pretences, it was very proper to acquaint the unwary, that thoſe falſe teachers were really men of ſelfiſh views and ſecular aims[h], and were not to be implicitly truſted upon ever ſo many ſmooth ſpeeches, or artful profeſſions, whether of friendlineſs, or godlineſs[i].

8. Laſtly, let it be noted, that open declared libertines are not the moſt dangerous of heretics; neither are the wildeſt hereſies, though worſt in quality, the moſt deſtructive in their conſequences. Some things are too groſs to deceive many, and too ſhocking to prevail much, or

[g] Acts xv. 5. [h] Rom. xvi. 17, 18.
[i] Vid. Dodwell, Differt. in Iren. iv. ſ. 23. p. 335.

or long. There is vaſtly greater danger of the chriſtian world's running into an half religion, than there is of their taking up with none, or with one that is plainly ſcandalous: and infinitely more, in all likelihood, will at length periſh for not being good enough, than for being monſters of lewdneſs, or impiety

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